

# The English Bible

A SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY

BY THE

REV. GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D.  
CAPUTH

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NEW YORK

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY  
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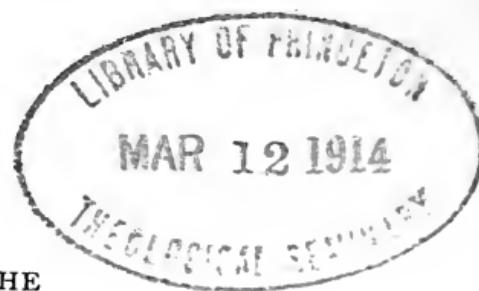
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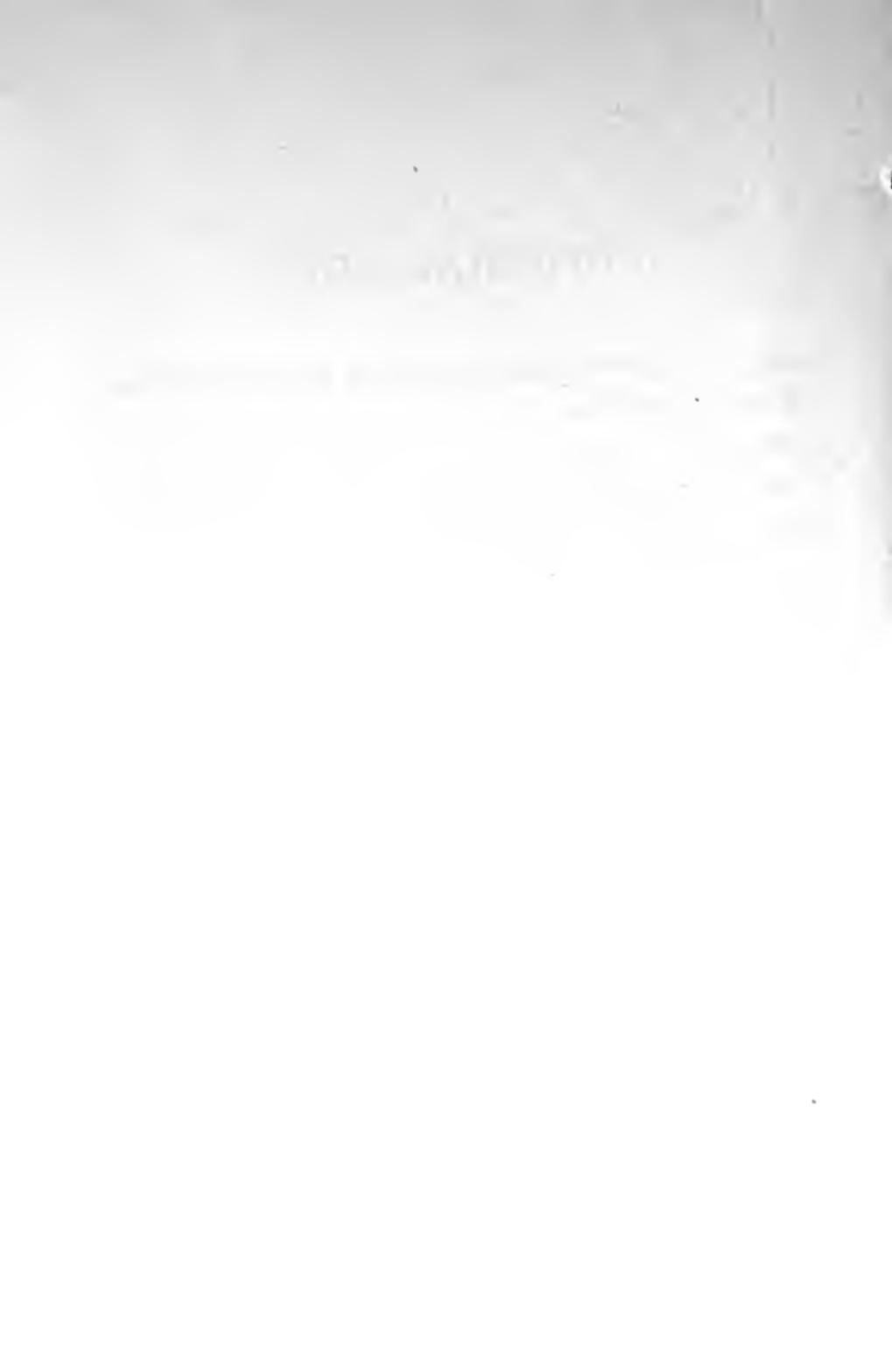
## EDITORIAL NOTE

ENCOURAGED by the favour with which our series of books has been received not only by those for whom they were in the first instance intended, but also by the general public in Great Britain and America, and in the British Colonies, the Editors requested Mr. Milligan to prepare the present volume on a subject of abiding interest and instruction. He has spared no pains to be both accurate and readable ; and we think he has succeeded very well. Inheriting the tastes of his lamented father, he has long been familiar with the subject ; and we commend his work as a compendious narrative of the growth of the English version of the Scriptures which has done so much to mould the speech and form the character of the Anglo-Saxon race.

A. H. CHARTERIS.

J. A. M'CLYMONT.

*August 1895.*



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

PREVIOUS text-books in this series have supplied introductions to the Old and New Testaments respectively, dealing with such questions as the writers and the contents of the various books. The following pages are an attempt to tell the story of our own *English version*, and to indicate the many ages and workers that have had a share in perfecting it as a translation of the sacred text. Such an inquiry is naturally connected with much in the general history of our country and of its language and literature which, in the prescribed limits of space, it has been impossible to notice. The author trusts, however, that enough has been said to arouse the interest of those to whom the subject is new, and to stimulate them to further researches on their own behalf. To aid them in this he has appended a list of the books which, with others mentioned in the footnotes, he has himself found most useful. But above all he would recommend the consulting, wherever it is at all practicable, of the various editions of the

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Bible itself, as accessible in the British Museum, the Euing collection of Bibles in the University of Glasgow, and other great libraries. "Nowhere else," it has been truly said, "does the maxim 'verify your references' apply with greater force."

The author desires further to express his indebtedness to the Rev. W. F. Moulton, D.D., Cambridge, for many acts of personal kindness connected with his work, and to the Rev. Professor Cowan, D.D., of Aberdeen, the Rev. A. Irvine Robertson, B.D., of Clackmannan, and the Editors of the series, for assistance in the revision of the proof-sheets.

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" Happy, and thrice happy, hath our English nation  
bene, since God hath given learned translators to expresse  
in our mother tongue the heavenly mysteries of His Holy  
Word, delivered to His Church in the Hebrew and Greeke  
languages ; who although they have, in some matters of no  
importance unto salvation, as men bene deceived ; yet have  
they faithfully delivered the whole substance of the heavenly  
doctrine conteyned in the Holy Scriptures, without any  
hereticale translations or wilfull corruptions."

FULKE, *Defence of Sincere and True  
Translations.*

# THE ENGLISH BIBLE

## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY PARAPHRASTS

1. Anglo-Saxon paraphrasts—Cædmon.
2. Bede.
3. King Alfred.
4. Ælfric.
5. Anglo-Norman versions—Rolle.

ON the title-page of our English Bible there appears frequently the following note: “Translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty’s special command.” We shall see the full force of these words when we come to the history of our Authorised Version, but in the meantime they may remind us of a fact too often forgotten, that the English Bible, as we have it to-day, did not spring into existence all at once. It is the result of a long and continuous growth, and to those who know its history bears traces of the many ages and the many hands which have combined in producing it. To sketch that history in what at best must be imperfect outline is the aim of this text-book.

In commencing to do so the first thing that strikes us is a feeling of wonder that, long though the history of the English Bible has been, it has not been still longer. For it is a remarkable fact that Christianity and Christian ordinances had been introduced into our island for many hundreds of years before the people possessed the sacred Scriptures in a language which they could understand. To all but the priests, and the

few learned men of those days, the Vulgate, or Latin version of the Bible, was necessarily a sealed book ; and not till nearly the close of the fourteenth century do we find any deliberate attempt to give a complete translation of it in English. Previous to this, however, various attempts had been made by means of metrical versions or paraphrases in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman to diffuse the knowledge of parts at least of the sacred writings ; and it may be well now to recall briefly the most important of these as paving the way for future translations.

§ I. **Anglo-Saxon Paraphrasts—Cædmon.**—The first of the Anglo-Saxon paraphrasts regarding whom we have any reliable information is **Cædmon**. According to the old historian Bede, about the year 680 this Cædmon, a poor Saxon cowherd, returned one night sad and dispirited to the abbey at Whitby, because he had been unable to take his part in singing at a banquet. But, as soon after he fell asleep, there appeared to him a visitant who saluting him said : “Cædmon, sing some song to me.” “I cannot sing,” was the surprised answer, “for that was the reason why I left the entertainment.” “Nevertheless,” replied the other, “you shall sing.” “What shall I sing?” he asked. “Sing the beginning of created beings,” was the rejoinder. And thereupon Cædmon began to sing well-ordered verses to the praise of God. In the morning he was conducted into the presence of the Abbess Hilda, to whom he repeated the verses ; and no sooner had he done so than all who heard acknowledged that “heavenly grace” had been conferred on him. And the Abbess commanded that he should be taught the whole course of sacred history, which he “converted into most harmonious verse ; and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in their turn his hearers.”

The paraphrases which Cædmon thus made comprised large portions of Old Testament history, and the main facts in the life of our Lord and the preaching of the Apostles, “besides many more about the Divine

benefits and judgments, by which he endeavoured to turn away all men from the love of vice, and to excite in them the love of, and application to, good actions." The following lines from the runic inscription on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire, which has been identified as a quotation from Cædmon, may illustrate the nature of his work. The Cross of Christ is supposed to be telling its own story :—

Beneath Him I quivered,  
But bow me I durst not,  
The Rich King upheaving  
They pierced Him with nails :  
On me see the deep scars,  
The bruises so shameful.  
I bore it all silent.

**§ 2. Bede.**—Other Anglo-Saxon versions of portions of Scripture followed. Thus in the eighth century the Psalter was translated by Eadhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, and by Guthlac, a hermit of Crowland near Peterborough, and the Gospels by Egbert, Bishop of Holy Island ; but more important than any of these was the work of the Venerable Bede (d. 735), the most famous scholar of his day in Western Europe. He himself has told us that he translated the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer into Anglo-Saxon for the use of the less educated priests ; while the last work on which he was engaged was a translation of the Gospel of St. John. Of the completion of this work his disciple Cuthbert has given so striking an account that, though well known, it may in part be repeated. The Tuesday before Ascension Day Bede, though suffering greatly, had spent in dictating, now and then among other things saying : " Go on quickly, I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away." On the following day his weakness increased, but he was able to take a touching farewell of all his fellows, and passed the day joyfully till the evening. Then the boy who was acting as his scribe said : " Dear master, there is yet one sentence

not written." "Write quickly," answered Bede. And when soon after the boy said : "The sentence is now written," he replied, "It is well; you have said the truth. It is ended." Shortly after, sitting on the pavement of his cell, and singing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," he "departed to the heavenly kingdom." Of the translation thus touchingly finished no remains have come down to us; but among the treasures of the Bodleian Library at Oxford may still be seen the old Græco-Latin MS. of the Acts of the Apostles which Bede is known to have used.

§ 3. **King Alfred.**—A royal translator comes next, **Alfred the Great**, and the spirit that prompted his efforts is well indicated in his own words : "I thought how I saw . . . how the churches were filled with treasures of books, and also with a great multitude of God's servants; yet they reaped very little fruit of these books, because they could understand nothing of them, as they were not written in their own native tongue." To supply this want the good king translated many notable Latin treatises, and gave further proof of his religious zeal by prefixing to his "Book of Laws" a translation of the Ten Commandments under the heading "Alfred's Dooms." The following translation of these "Dooms" will still be read with interest :—

The Lord spake these words to Moses, and thus said :  
I am the Lord thy God. I led thee out of the  
land of the Egyptians and of their bondage.

1. Love thou not other strange gods above me.
2. Utter thou not my name idly, for thou shalt not  
be guiltless towards me, if thou utter my name idly.
3. Remember that thou hallow the rest-day. Work  
for yourselves six days, and on the seventh rest.  
For in six days Christ wrought the heavens and the  
earth, the seas, and all creatures that are in them, and  
rested on the seventh day : and therefore the Lord  
hallowed it.

4. Honour thy father and thy mother, whom the Lord hath given thee, that thou mayest be the longer living on earth.
5. Slay thou not.
6. Commit thou not adultery.
7. Steal thou not.
8. Say thou not false-witness.
9. Covet thou not thy neighbour's goods unjustly.
10. Make thou not to thyself golden or silver gods.

Alfred was further engaged, we are told, on a version of the Psalms at the time of his death, and his patriotic wish is often quoted that "all the first-born youth of his kingdom should employ themselves on nothing till they were able to read well the English Scriptures."<sup>1</sup>

§ 4. **Ælfric.**—Other versions deserving of special notice are the "**Book of Durham**," or Gospels of St. Cuthbert, and the "**Rushworth Gloss**," interlinear Latin and Anglo-Saxon translations of the four Gospels, and the **Heptateuch** of **Ælfric** (about 1040 A.D.) a free rendering of the five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and certain other Old Testament books. **Ælfric's** object in translating is clearly expressed in his homily *On Reading the Scriptures*: "Whoever would be one with God, must often pray, and often read the Holy Scriptures. For when we pray, we speak to God; and when we read the Bible, God speaks to us. . . . Happy is he, then, who reads the Scriptures, if he convert the words into actions. The whole of the Scriptures are written for our salvation, and by them we obtain the knowledge of the truth."

§ 5. **Anglo-Norman Versions—Rolle.**—The work of Bible translation naturally received a check during the confusion accompanying the Danish and Norman invasions. The check was however only temporary, and there are still extant MSS. in Anglo-Norman, or Middle-English as it is sometimes called, containing metrical paraphrases of considerable portions of Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars however assert that the words in the original do not mean more than "English writing."

ture, amongst which the most noteworthy are the **Ormulum**, a metrical paraphrase on the Gospels and Acts by one Orm (about 1150 A.D.), and the **Sowlehele** or *Salus Animæ* (about 1250 A.D.), which along with other religious poetry contains a paraphrase in verse of the leading facts of the Old and New Testaments. Apart from their other associations these MSS. are interesting as showing the change gradually passing over our language. Already we can see the rude but unmistakable beginnings of our modern English, and the version of the Psalter executed by **Richard Rolle**, the hermit of Hampole, who died in 1349, can still be read with comparative ease. Here, for example, is Rolle's version of our Psalm xxiii. We print it exactly as he wrote it.

#### PSALM xxii. (xxiii.), ROLLE'S VERSION

Lord gouerns me and nathyng sal me want : in  
sted of pasture thare he me sett.  
On the watere of rehetynge<sup>1</sup> forth he me broght : my  
saule he turnyd.  
He led me on the stretis of rightwisnes : for his  
name.  
ffor whi, if i. had gane in myddis of the shadow of  
ded : i. sal noght dred illes, for thou ert with me.  
Thi wand and thi staf : thai haf confortyd me.  
Thou has grayid<sup>2</sup> in my syght the bord : agayns thaim  
that angirs me.  
Thou fattid my heued in oyle : and my chalice  
drunkynand what it is bright.  
And thi mercy sal folow me : all the dayes of my  
lif.  
And that i. won<sup>3</sup> in the hows of lord : in lenght  
of dayes.

Rolle's version is further noteworthy as almost, if not quite, the first attempt at a literal *prose* translation. His method he has himself described : "In this work I

<sup>1</sup> Refreshing.

<sup>2</sup> Prepared.

<sup>3</sup> Dwell.

seek no strange English but easiest and commonest and such that is most like to the Latin. . . . In the translation I follow the letter as much as I may, and where I find no proper English I follow the wit of the words, so that those that shall read it need not dread erring. In expounding I follow holy Doctors, and reason : reproving sin." Praiseworthy as Rolle's aim was, he was only able to fulfil it with reference to a small portion of Scripture, while it must be kept clearly in view that in what he did accomplish, he along with his predecessors was thinking of the convenience of the clergy rather than of the needs of the common people. The very idea of a people's Bible does not seem yet to have occurred to any one. It is the more striking that within forty years from this time the whole Bible was actually translated into English with the express design of its becoming the common property of the nation. The man to whom this was due, and who in consequence ranks as the first of our Bible translators, was **John Wycliffe.**

## CHAPTER II

JOHN WYCLIFFE

1. Wycliffe's early years.
2. Embassy to Bruges.
3. Wycliffe's times.
4. Work of translation.
5. Attacks upon Wycliffe.
6. His death.

**§ I. Wycliffe's early Years.**—John Wycliffe<sup>1</sup> was born about the year 1320 in the vicinity of Richmond in Yorkshire. Of his early years very little is known, but after the year 1356 we find him filling various important offices at the University of Oxford. In 1361 he was appointed by his college to the rectory of Fylingham in Lincolnshire, and a few years later exchanged this for Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire. He did not however abandon his connection with Oxford, but continued to deliver lectures on Philosophy and Logic, and later on Theology, distinguished by a learning and a zeal which led to his being known amongst his contemporaries by the prophetic title of “the Evangelical Doctor.” It was indeed to his intimate knowledge of the Scriptures that Wycliffe owed even then his scholastic fame, though there is no evidence that up to this time he had ever thought of what was to be the crowning glory of his life—his translation of them into English. Nor as yet had he any open quarrel with Rome; for the statement, frequently found in histories of the Bible, that so early as 1360 he had come forward with attacks upon the monastic system, is wholly without foundation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name is spelt in nearly thirty different ways.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lechler, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors*, p. 120 (1 vol. edition by Lorimer).

**§ 2. Embassy to Bruges.**—When however the opportunity for action came, Wycliffe was not found wanting. In 1365 Pope Urban V. had renewed his claim upon England for the payment of a thousand marks, as the feudatory tribute which had been exacted from King John in 1213, but which had fallen into arrear for a period of thirty-three years. This claim King Edward III. and his Parliament unanimously refused to concede, and amongst other publications of the time supporting their action was a tract by Wycliffe, setting forth the rights of Parliament on this question. The part he thus took in a controversy of such national importance, as well as the position which he occupied as one of the King's chaplains, led to Edward's selecting "our beloved and faithful master John de Wiclf" as one of the royal commissioners sent to Bruges in 1374 to treat with the Papal Nuncio regarding the reservation of benefices. The question was at the time a burning one in England. During a period, dating back again to King John, the Popes of Rome had claimed the right to traffic in English benefices ; and the consequence was that many important livings had been gifted to strangers and absentees, whose sole interest in them consisted in drawing the revenues, as if "God had given His sheep not to be pastured, but to be shaven and shorn."

The Conference ended, as conferences frequently do, in a compromise ; but upon Wycliffe's mind the proceedings produced an effect which has been often compared with the effect in later days upon Luther of his visit to Rome, and which certainly proved itself to be attended with far-reaching consequences. Hitherto his opposition to Rome had been conducted principally, if not wholly, on national and patriotic grounds ; but from this time he comes before us rather in the light of an ecclesiastical reformer—"the Morning Star of the Reformation."

**§ 3. Wycliffe's Times.**—The need of reform, it is certain, must have been daily pressing itself on Wycliffe's mind. The age in which he lived was a very dark age.

General social distress existed not only at home, but throughout the Continent ; while in England the Black Death, or Pestilence, swept repeatedly over the country, carrying off on its first outbreak no less than half the population. Meanwhile the church was corrupt, the clergy ignorant, and the people neglected ; and to crown all, in 1378 came the scandal of the Great Schism, two rival Popes at Rome and at Avignon anathematising one another. And yet out of all this evil good was to come. "The unsettledness of the period," says Dr. Eadie, "with its bitter strifes, the rooted enmity of class against class, the hardheartedness of statesmen, and the ambitious factions of Churchmen with their worldliness and intrigues, impressed Wycliffe with the indelible conviction that all ranks needed to know and study the Divine Word in the tongue intelligible to them."<sup>1</sup> Many quotations from Wycliffe's own writings might be brought forward to substantiate this ; but a single sentence from his preface to an English translation of a Latin Harmony of the Gospels must suffice : "Christian men ought much to travail night and day about text of Holy Writ, and namely [especially] the Gospel in their mother tongue, since Jesus Christ, very God and very man, taught this Gospel with His own blessed mouth and kept it in His life."

**§ 4. Work of Translation.**—Wycliffe began accordingly with a translation of the Apocalypse, in whose mingled denunciation of sin and comfort in suffering he must have seen so fitting a message for his own time. The Gospels with a commentary came next, that "with God's grace poor Christian men may some deal [partly] know the text of the Gospel . . . and therein know the meek and pure and charitable living of Christ and His Apostles, to sue [follow] them in virtues and bliss." Other books followed, until probably in 1380 the whole New Testament was completed. To this was shortly added a translation of the Old Testament, principally by one of his friends, Nicolas de Hereford, so that by the

<sup>1</sup> *The English Bible*, vol. i. pp. 55-6.

middle of the year 1382 Wycliffe had the joy of seeing the whole Scriptures in the hands of the people "in their mother tongue."

**§ 5. Attacks upon Wycliffe.**—All this, it must be remembered, was not accomplished without difficulty and even danger. Hereford was cited before the Synod in London in 1382, and had afterwards to leave the country;<sup>1</sup> while Wycliffe's own life was one long struggle against the attacks of Rome. Foxe has preserved a lively account of a meeting of Convocation in 1377 from which he only escaped through the intervention of the Duke of Lancaster; while a second attempt against him at Lambeth about a year later was frustrated by the intervention of the widowed Princess of Wales. How bitter indeed was the hostility with which he was regarded is proved by a well-known incident—one of the few glimpses we have into the personal life of the reformer. In 1379 while discharging his annual duty at Oxford as a divinity Professor he was seized with an alarming illness. Four friars, believing that his end was near, contrived to get admission into his sickroom, and called upon him as a dying man to retract all that he had said against their order. But Wycliffe was not to be daunted. With the aid of his servant he raised himself on his pillow, and with all the strength he could command exclaimed : "I shall not die, but live to declare the evil deeds of the friars." And confused and confounded the friars left the room.

A year or two later the determined hostility of the Church was proved by the public condemnation of Wycliffe's teaching at a synod held at the Dominican Monastery in Blackfriars, London, when however the reformer himself was not present. A terrible earthquake which occurred during the sittings of the Synod, and threatened at one time to break them up, was ingen-

<sup>1</sup> An interesting proof of this is afforded by what is believed to be the original MS. of his work preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and which breaks off suddenly after the second word of Baruch iii. 20

ously turned by the President, Archbishop Courtenay, into a good rather than an evil omen, as presaging the purging of the kingdom by the condemnation of heresy, though not without trouble and great agitation. "Pontius Pilate and Herod are made friends to-day," was Wycliffe's own bitter comment on the union against him between the prelates and the monastic orders long at deadly feud; "since they have made a heretic of Christ, it is an easy inference for them to count simple Christians heretics."

**§ 6. His Death.**—Contrary however to his own expectations, Wycliffe was allowed to die in peace. Retiring to his quiet rectory of Lutterworth, to which he had been presented by the king in the year of the Bruges Conference, he pursued his accustomed work of teaching and preaching. The end came very suddenly. On 28th December 1384, he was suddenly struck with paralysis while hearing mass, and passed quietly away on the last day of the year. "Admirable," says the old Church historian Fuller, "that a hare so often hunted with so many packs of dogs should die at last quietly sitting on his form."

After his death a petition was presented to the Pope that Wycliffe's bones should be disinterred from their resting-place in Lutterworth Churchyard; but the Pope to his credit took no action, and it was left to the Council of Constance thirty years later (4th May 1415) to pronounce Wycliffe "the leader of heresy in that age," and to order his books to be burned and his remains removed from consecrated ground. Not till 1428 however was the order carried out, when the remains having been burned to ashes were cast into the Swift that passes by Lutterworth on its way to the Avon. Thus "this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

## CHAPTER III

## THE WYCLIFFITE VERSIONS

1. Wycliffe, the first English translator of the Bible.
2. Purvey's revision.
3. Relation of the Wycliffite versions.
4. Dependence on the Vulgate.
5. Comments and notes.
6. Homely diction.
7. Reception of the versions.

**§ 1. Wycliffe the first English translator of the Bible.**—In the preceding chapter we saw how Wycliffe succeeded in giving to the English people the whole Bible in their native tongue. We have now to turn to some particulars regarding his translation and the work of his immediate followers; and the question at once meets us, Was Wycliffe actually *the first* to translate the Bible into English? The contrary is sometimes stated. Sir Thomas More, writing about 1530, asserts that “the whole Bible was long before his (Wycliffe's) days by virtuous and well-learned men translated into the English tongue,” and adds that he himself had seen “Bibles fair and old written in English”; but it must be kept in view that at the time More was writing to deprecate as far as possible Wycliffe's and Tindale's work, and that in all probability the copies which he claims to have seen were actually the work of Wycliffe or his followers. While again, the assertion of King James's translators in their Preface that “much about that time, even in our King Richard the Second's days, John Trevisa translated them (the Scriptures) into English,” seems to rest on a very slender foundation. Until, then, clearer evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, to

Wycliffe's translation must be awarded the honour of being at the time "not only the one translation of the whole of the Scriptures into English which had ever been made, but actually by a hundred years the first translation into a European language."<sup>1</sup> Nor is it out of place to remark here that Wycliffe may in consequence be regarded as the father of our later English prose. As a hundred and fifty years later Luther's German version of the Bible gave a fresh impetus to all German literature, so to the clear, homely English of Wycliffe's Bible and tracts may be traced the beginning of that native prose literature of which we are justly so proud.

X      **§ 2. Purvey's Revision.**—Nor can we doubt, to pass to a second point, that, like Luther again, Wycliffe spent much of his leisure after his retirement in revising and correcting his version. Death carried him off, however, in the midst of his labours, and it was left to his friend and assistant, **John Purvey**, to complete this revision. It was issued in the year 1388, with a long and most interesting Prologue. "A simple creature," so Purvey writes, "hath translated the Bible out of Latin into English. . . . First, this simple creature had much travail, with divers fellows and helpers, to gather many old Bibles, and other doctors, and common glosses, and to make one Latin Bible some deal [partly] true. . . . And I pray, for charity and for common profit of Christian souls, that if any wise man find any default of the truth of translation, let him set in the true sentence and opening of Holy Writ, but look that he examine truly his Latin Bible. . . . Lord God ! since at the beginning of faith so many men translated into Latin, and to great profit of Latin men, let one simple creature of God translate into English, for profit of English men. . . . Therefore a translator hath great need to study well the sentence, both before and after, and look that such equivalent words accord with the sentence, and he hath need to live a clean life, and be full devout in prayers, and have not his wit occupied about worldly things, that the Holy Spirit,

<sup>1</sup> Burrows, *Wyclif's Place in History*, p. 20.

author of wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, direct him in his work, and suffer him not to err. . . . By this manner, with good living and great travail, men may come to true and clear translating, and true understanding of Holy Writ, seem it never so hard at the beginning. God grant to us all grace to know well, and keep well Holy Writ, and suffer joyfully some pain for it at the last ! Amen."

**§ 3. Relation of the Wycliffite Versions.**— Apart from its personal interest this Prologue has proved of great assistance to scholars in enabling them to distinguish between what we may call the *earlier* version, Wycliffe's own version, and the *later*, the revision by Purvey. Both these versions were anonymous. The peril of Bible-translation at that period was too great to admit of translators putting their names to their work, and in consequence there was for long much confusion between the two versions, and in several well-known works, such as Bagster's *Hexapla*, the later revision is actually printed as Wycliffe's own. But a careful comparison of this Prologue with Purvey's other writings, and an examination of the later translation on the principles there laid down, prove beyond a doubt that he was the author of it, while the "English Bible late translated" to which he makes reference can only be Wycliffe's version of 1382. It would be interesting, if our space permitted, to print parallel extracts from the two versions as showing the nature of the changes which Purvey introduced; but in the meantime we must content ourselves with simply giving a short extract from each, printing it exactly as it was first written. Here is how in the earlier version Wycliffe rendered the Lord's Prayer :—

MATT. vi. 9-13 (WYCLIFFE, 1382)

Oure fader that art in heuenes, halwid be thi name ; thi kyngdom cumme to ; be thi wille don as in heuen and in erthe ; ȝif to vs this day oure breed ouer other substance ; and forȝeue to vs oure dettis,

as we forȝeue to oure dettours ; and leede vs not in to temptacioun, but delyuere vs fro yuel. Amen.

From Purvey we may take a few verses from Philip-pians ii :—

PHIL. ii. 5-11 (PURVEY, 1388)

And fele ȝe this thing in ȝou, which also in Crist Jhesu ; that whanne he was in the forme of God, demyde not rauelyn,<sup>1</sup> that hym silf were euene to God ; but he lowide hym silf, takinge the forme of a seruaunt, and was maad in to the licknesse of men, and in abite<sup>2</sup> was foundun as a man. He mekide<sup>3</sup> hym silf, and was maad obedient to the deth, ȝhe, to the deth of the cross. For which thing God enhaunsid<sup>4</sup> hym, and ȝaf to hym a name that is aboue al name ; that in the name of Jhesu ech kne be bowid, of heuenli thingis, of erteli thingis, and of hellis ; and eche tunge knoueleche, that the Lord Jhesu Crist is in the glorie of God the fadir.

In neither case, it will be observed, is there any division into verses, but in the originals reference was facilitated by means of letters of the alphabet inserted at intervals in the margin.

**§ 4. Dependence on the Vulgate.**—It would lie altogether beyond our present aim to attempt anything like a critical examination of the two Wycliffite versions ; but one great, though unavoidable, defect which distinguished them may be noted. Both were *translations of a translation*. Neither Wycliffe nor Purvey translated directly from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, but based their work on the Vulgate or Latin Bible then in general use, or rather, as Purvey tells us, on a Latin text made as accurate as possible by a comparison of “many old Bibles,” but still only “some deal [partly] true.” All the errors therefore into which the Latin text had fallen are here reproduced ; and further, the translators’ anxiety to keep as closely as

<sup>1</sup> Rapine.

<sup>2</sup> Habit.

<sup>3</sup> Humbled.

<sup>4</sup> Exalted.

possible to the text before them makes many of their renderings unintelligible in English. On the other hand, this dependence on the Vulgate had some compensating advantages. For one thing it enabled the new English version to be recognised as the same as the "common Bible," acknowledged by the whole Western Church; while in not a few instances, more particularly in the New Testament, the Vulgate is actually nearer the original text than many of the late Greek MSS. which subsequent translators used.<sup>1</sup> In the Lord's Prayer, for example, as given above, Wycliffe rightly omits the doxology at the end, which, as our R.V. shows, has no place in the best texts; while in the shortened version of the same prayer in Luke xi. 2-4 he is again in agreement with the R.V. in omitting the third and seventh petitions, "Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth," and "Deliver us from evil." In Phil. ii. 10 also it is interesting to find Purvey anticipating the correct rendering, "*in* the name of Jhesu."

**§ 5. Comments and Notes.**—A noticeable feature of Purvey's revision is the introduction of short comments in the margin, many of them taken from the writings of a certain Lire or Nicolas de Lyra, a famous scholar of the fourteenth century. One or two examples must suffice :—

Psalm xv. (xvi.) "† A. glos. This salm is maad of Dauid, to the preysing of the meke and symple Crist. A. et alii."

Psalm xcix. (c.) "† A. glos. This salm was maad to be songen in the offring of pesible sacrifices, that was offrid to God for sum benefice to be geten of him, to wiche the plesing of God is requyred biforn, ether for benefice now geten, to wich the doing of thanking is oweth to seve. *Lire here.* K."

Rom. iv. 14, "Of the lawe, that is, of the werkis of lawe. *Lire here.*"

Rom. x. 12 ("No distinction of Jew and of

<sup>1</sup> Moulton, *The History of the English Bible*, p. 29.

*Greek*")—"As to rigtfulnesse, which is by the feith of Crist. *Lyre here.*"

Rom. xi. 2, "Knew; that is, bifore ordeynede bi grace to blis. *Lyre here.*"

2 Cor. v. 21 "(*Sin*)"—"That is, sacrifice for synne. *Austyn.*"

Purvey also follows Wycliffe's example by incorporating in his text occasional explanatory notes, carefully distinguished from the text by different orthography as—

Matt. xiv. 1, "In that tyme Eroude tetrarke, *prynce of the fourthe part.*"

Matt. xxii. 23, "No risyng aȝen *to lijf.*"

1 Cor. xvi. 1, "But of the gaderyngis *of money.*"

Gal. ii. 10, "Oneli that we hadde mynde of pore men *of Crist.*"

It cannot be pretended that notes such as these do much for the elucidation of the sacred text, but they at least do no harm. There is nothing polemical or controversial about them, and in this they differ happily from what we shall find in some other versions. Both Wycliffe and his successor realised that Scripture should in the first instance be allowed to speak for itself, without any of that "docking and clipping" of which the former was wont to accuse the friars. "The Sacred Scriptures," these are his own words, "are the property of the people, and one which no party should be allowed to wrest from them." And in his treatise, *The Wicket*,--referring to the opposition which his translation had aroused,—he writes: "They say it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scripture in English, and so they would condemn the Holy Ghost, who gave it in tongues to the Apostles of Christ to speak the Word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven. . . . Why, then, should it be taken away from us in this land, that are Christian men?"

**§ 6. Homely Diction.**—In accordance with these noble words is the homely diction which characterises

both versions. Writing expressly *for the people*, the translators used every effort to make their meaning clear and intelligible, and in consequence many of their renderings impress us still with their freshness and force. Take these examples selected almost at random from Purvey's revision of St. Matthew : "The lanterne of thi bodi is thin i<sup>ȝ</sup>e" (vi. 22); "A leche<sup>1</sup> is not nedeful to men that faren wel, but to men that ben yuel at ese" (ix. 12); "And lo ! a man that hadde a drye hoond" (xii. 10); "Lo ! my child, whom Y haue chosun, my derling" (xii. 18); "And the boot in the myddel of the see was schoggid with wawis" (xiv. 24). Or these, some of whose expressions have an unexpectedly familiar sound to Scotch ears : "Twey men metten hym, that hadden deuelis, and camen out of graues, ful woode<sup>2</sup>" (viii. 28); "And loo ! in a greet bire<sup>3</sup> al the droue wente heedlyng in to the see" (viii. 32); "And he cometh, and fyndith it voide, and clensid with besyms,<sup>4</sup> and maad faire" (xii. 44); "But thei dispisiden, and wenten forth, oon in to his toun,<sup>5</sup> another to his marchaundise" (xxii. 5).

Other renderings suggested by the peculiar customs of the time are no longer so appropriate, as : "And Jhesus stood bifor the domesman,<sup>6</sup> and the iustice axide him, and seide, Art thou King of Jewis ?" or "Thanne knyȝtis of the iustice token Jhesu in the moot halle,<sup>7</sup> and gadriden to hym al the cumpeny of knyȝtis" (Matt. xxvii. 11, 27); while naturally many of the words occurring in both versions are now quite obsolete.<sup>8</sup> A slight change of spelling gives the version as a whole, however, a wonderfully modern aspect, and it has been stated that when a few years ago the experiment was tried of reading

<sup>1</sup> Physician.

<sup>2</sup> Mad.

<sup>3</sup> Rush.

<sup>4</sup> Brooms.

<sup>5</sup> Farm.

<sup>6</sup> Judge.

<sup>7</sup> Hall of Assembly.

<sup>8</sup> Thus in the 1382 edition we find "cultre" for "knife" (Prov. xxiii. 2); "walker" as an explanation of "fuller" (Mark ix. 3); or in the 1388 edition "alie" for "father-in-law" (Exod. xviii. 5); "catchepollis" for "serjeants" (Acts xvi. 35). Cf. too "vertu" used in the unfamiliar sense of "strength," in "the vertu of synne is the lawe" (1 Cor. xv. 56).

Wycliffe's translation aloud in Yorkshire, the author's native county, hardly a word or expression seemed peculiar.

§ 7. **Reception of the Versions.**—The immediate reception of the new versions, and more particularly of Purvey's revision, was striking. “Copies passed into the hands of all classes of the people. Even the Sovereign himself and the princes of the blood royal did not disdain to possess them.”<sup>1</sup> To the Papal party this could not but be very displeasing. One old chronicler goes the length of complaining that “in this way the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine”; and in 1391 a Bill was introduced into Parliament to forbid the circulation of the English Scriptures. It was rejected however through the influence of the Duke of Lancaster, who answered “right sharply, we will not be the refuse of all other nations; for since they have God's law, which is the law of our belief, in their own language, we will have ours in English whoever say nay.” What however the Church could not persuade the State to do she did for herself, and in 1408 a Convocation sitting at Oxford passed a resolution prohibiting the translation of any part of the Holy Scriptures into English by any unauthorised person, or the reading of any translation, made either in Wycliffe's time or since, until it be first formally approved. In the beginning of the next year this decree, generally known as Arundel's Statute, from the man who mainly prompted it, was confirmed at St. Paul's. But in spite of it the circulation and reading of the Scriptures went steadily on. Copies, notwithstanding their cost, were eagerly sought for by all classes of people; and the happy possessors of Bible-knowledge became in their turn the eager disseminators of it amongst others. Many touching

<sup>1</sup> Forshall and Madden, *The Wycliffite Versions*, Preface, p. xxxii. In further proof of this statement the editors mention that in the preparation of their work they were able to examine “nearly 150 MSS., containing the whole or parts of Purvey's Bible, the majority of which were written within the space of forty years from its being finished.”

instances are given by Dr. Eadie. Thus one Alice Colins was commonly sent for to meetings, "to recite unto them the Ten Commandments and the Epistles of Peter and James"; and in 1429 Marjery Backster was indicted because she asked her maid Joan to "come and hear her husband read the law of Christ, out of a book he was wont to read by night." Copies of the Wycliffite versions seem even to have penetrated into Scotland; for in telling of the burning of John Resby as an heretic in 1408, the Abbot of Inchcolm laments that the books of Wycliffe were possessed by several Lollards in Scotland, and kept with "devilish" secrecy; and towards the close of the same century we hear of one Campbell of Cessnock who had a priest at home "who read the Bible to them in their vernacular."

When we hear of incidents such as these we can understand that it was no fancy picture that Foxe drew when, speaking of the beginning of the sixteenth century, he could write: "Certainly the fervent zeal of those Christian days seemed much superior to these our days and times, as may appear by their sitting up all night in reading and hearing, also by the expenses and charges they incurred in buying books in English, some of whom gave five marks [equal to about £40 in our money], some more, some less, for a book; some gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. James, or of St. Paul in English. . . . To see their labours, their earnest seeking, their burning zeals, their readings, their watchings, their sweet assemblies . . . may make us now in these our days of free profession, to blush for shame."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Acts and Monuments*, bk. vii. p. 419 (ed. Seymour).

## CHAPTER IV

## WILLIAM TINDALE—HIS LIFE

1. A century of preparation.
2. Tindale's early days at Little Sodbury.
3. Visit to London.
4. Exile.
5. First printed English New Testaments.
6. Their reception in England.
7. Further work of translation.
8. Tindale's last days and death.

**§ I. A Century of Preparation.**—A period of a hundred years intervenes between John Wycliffe and our next great Bible-translator ; but during it two things happened, both of which had an important bearing upon the future history of the Bible in England.

The first of these was the **discovery of printing**. Up to this time the multiplication of copies of the Holy Scriptures had been by the slow and laborious process of copying ; but about the middle of the fifteenth century, Fust, a goldsmith of Mainz, perfecting Gutenberg's experiments, issued from the press the first printed Latin Bible, generally known as the Mazarin Bible, from a copy found in the library of Cardinal Mazarin. It is believed indeed to have been the earliest *book* printed from movable type, and hence Hallam can speak of "this venerable and splendid volume leading up the crowded myriads of its followers, and imploring, as it were, a blessing on the new art, by dedicating its first-fruits to the service of Heaven."<sup>1</sup> The discovery soon

<sup>1</sup> *Introd. to Lit. of Europe*, vol. i. p. 157. In our own country the first printed book in which any portion of the Scriptures appeared was *The Golden Legend*, a large collection of Romish legends from Latin and French originals, but with which the translator and

spread, and of the Latin Bible alone ninety-one editions had been issued before the close of the century.

The other point was the **revival of learning**. “Greece,” in the striking language of an English scholar, “had risen from the grave with the New Testament in her hand,” and though England did not at first welcome the “new learning,” towards the close of the fifteenth century a noble band of scholars had congregated at Oxford, including such men as William Latimer, Thomas More, and John Colet. To these in 1497 came to be added no less a person than the great Erasmus.

Twelve years later Erasmus accepted a professorship of divinity at Cambridge, where, in addition to his other work, he diligently prosecuted those studies which in 1516 resulted in his issuing at Basle the first Greek New Testament. The importance of this book, especially in its later and amended editions, in the history of Bible-translation can hardly be over-estimated. Instead of being dependent any longer on a Latin translation, scholars had now before them in an accessible and wonderfully correct form the original Greek text; while as aids to its study various grammars and lexicons had begun to appear.

Nor meanwhile was the Old Testament forgotten. The entire Hebrew Bible was first printed at Soncino, near Cremona, in 1488; and in 1520 there appeared the great Complutensian Polyglot, which contained not only the original texts of Scripture, but Greek and Hebrew grammars, and a Hebrew vocabulary. Never before had such facilities been offered for an accurate rendering of the Bible into the English tongue, and it falls to us now to sketch the life of the man who was to accomplish this, and “to whom it has been allowed more than to any other man to give its characteristic shape to our English Bible.”<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. Tindale's early days at Little Sodbury.

printer, William Caxton, incorporated many Bible stories. The first edition appeared in 1483.

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *History of the English Bible* (2nd edit.), p. 24.

—William Tindale<sup>1</sup> was born on the borders of Wales, probably at Slymbridge in Gloucestershire, about the year 1484. More precise than this we cannot be ; while as regards his early years we have only the testimony of Foxe that he was “brought up even of a child in the University of Oxford, being always of most upright manners and pure life.” From Oxford he went to Cambridge, attracted in all probability by the fame of Erasmus’s Lectures, and about the end of 1521 returned to his native county as chaplain and tutor in the family of Sir John Walsh of Little Sodbury. There he was in the habit of getting into disputation with “divers doctors and learned men,” who frequented the house, confirming his opinions by “open and manifest Scripture,” until “those great beneficed doctors waxed weary, and bare a secret grudge in their hearts against Master Tyndale.”<sup>2</sup> About that time, too, he translated into English a book by Erasmus entitled *The Manual of a Christian Soldier*, which, when his master and lady had read, “those great prelates were no more so often called to the house, nor when they came had the cheer nor countenance as they were wont to have.” At their instigation accordingly suspicions of heresy began to be raised against Tindale, and he was summoned to appear before the bishop’s chancellor. No one could however be found to lay a definite charge against him, and the case was dismissed. Shortly afterwards, it is said, Tindale happening to be in the company of a learned man, pressed him so sorely in argument that the learned man said : “We were better be without God’s law than the Pope’s.” “I defy the Pope and all his laws,” exclaimed Tindale in righteous wrath, and then added : “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough

<sup>1</sup> Like Wycliffe’s, Tindale’s name is found spelt in many different ways. For purposes of safety the translator also passed at times under the assumed name of William Hychyns.

<sup>2</sup> From Foxe’s first account (1563) of Tindale, which is singularly graphic, and appears to have been supplied to the martyrologist by one who had it from Tindale’s own lips. Both it and the later account (1570) will be found in the valuable Preface to Arber’s *Facsimile of the First Printed New Testament*, pp. 8-12.

shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.”<sup>1</sup> And to the same effect, looking back on this period ten years later, he writes—and the words should be carefully noted, as showing how thus early he had clearly set before him what was to be the work of his life—“A thousand books had they (the priests) lever [rather] to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the Scripture should come to light. . . . Which thing only moved me to translate the New Testament. Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue.”

§ 3. **Visit to London.**—This was a task, however, which Tindale quickly perceived that he could not accomplish at Sodbury. “I was so turmoiled,” he tells us, “in the country where I was.” And he bethought him of Tunstal, Bishop of London, whom he had heard Erasmus praise for his great learning. He repaired accordingly to London, but only to find that Tunstal was not inclined to do anything for him. “His house was full, he had more than he could well find; and advised me to seek in London, where he said I could not lack a service.” The prediction was fulfilled, for Tindale, while officiating as preacher in St. Dunstan’s-in-the-West, had made the acquaintance of one Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy cloth merchant, who now took him into his house. And there for a year he remained, living, according to Monmouth’s testimony, “like a good priest as methought. He studied most part of the day and of the night at his book; and he would eat but sodden meat by his good will, nor drink but small single beer.” Gradually, however, the conviction forced itself upon the solitary worker “not only that there was

<sup>1</sup> The form of this determination may have been suggested by some words of his old teacher Erasmus in his *Exhortation*: “I wish that the husbandman may sing parts of them (the Scriptures) at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveller may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way.”

\* no room in my Lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England."

§ 4. **Exile.**—Voluntarily therefore Tindale determined to exile himself in prosecution of his self-appointed task, and in May 1524 left England—never to return. His movements for a time are very uncertain; but it is generally believed that he went first to Hamburg, where shortly afterwards he issued translations of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark separately. Either, too, in this year or the following, he seems to have visited Wittenberg, where he would doubtless see much of Luther, though we cannot accept the close confederacy of the two men in the work of translation which is sometimes alleged.

In any case, there can be no doubt that Tindale was in Cologne in 1525 with the view of seeing a complete edition of the New Testament in quarto through the press. Little progress had however been made with the work, when an unfortunate interruption took place. A certain priest, John Coclæus, managed to extract from the Cologne printers while heated with wine the secret that 3000 copies of an English New Testament were in the press, and that it was the intention of the English merchants, by whom the expenses were being borne, to disperse the work, when finished, widely through all England. Coclæus lost no time in communicating his discovery to the authorities, and Tindale and his assistant Roye<sup>1</sup> had barely time to seize the precious sheets and make their escape by the Rhine to Worms, then known for its favour to the reformed doctrines.

### § 5. First printed English New Testaments.—

<sup>1</sup> Of this Roye, Tindale in his *Parable of the Wicked Mammon* gives no very favourable account. He was "a man somewhat crafty when he cometh unto new acquaintance, and before he be thorough known. . . . Nevertheless, I suffered all things till that was ended, which I could not do alone without one both to write and to help me to compare the texts together. When that was ended I took my leave, and bade him farewell for our two lives, and, as men say, a day longer."

At Worms Tindale set to work once more, and doubtless for the purpose of eluding detection the size of the book was altered, and 3000 copies of an *octavo* edition were issued. Immediately afterwards—though for this we have to rely on circumstantial evidence only—the larger *quarto* edition, whose printing had been interrupted in Cologne, was also completed at Worms. Both editions, like the Wycliffite versions, were at first published anonymously, though for a different reason. For, as Tindale himself tells us, “I followed the counsel of Christ which exhorteth men (Matt. vi.) to do their good deeds secretly, and to be content with the conscience of welldoing.”

**§ 6. Their Reception in England.**—We shall return to these New Testaments again, for all particulars regarding the *first New Testaments printed in English* cannot fail to be of interest; but in the meantime we may notice that probably in the spring of 1526 copies of both editions were dispatched to England. Warning of their coming had already been forwarded to King Henry VIII. and Wolsey both by Cochlæus, who describes them as “that most pernicious article of merchandise,” and by one Lee, the King’s almoner, who had been travelling on the Continent; but the utmost efforts of the authorities seemed powerless to stop their circulation. Another plan was accordingly tried, and Tunstal, Bishop of London, whom we have met in connection with Tindale before, was called upon to denounce the new version from St. Paul’s. This he did with great vehemence, declaring “in his furiousness” that there were above 3000 errors in the translation; while his condemnation was accompanied by a public burning of the Testaments both in London and Oxford. It was only what Tindale had expected. “In burning the New Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for: no more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God’s will it shall so be.”

It is doubtful however whether all this violence had any other effect than that of drawing increased atten-

tion to Tindale's work. Thus in 1528 one Robert Necton confessed to carrying on a regular work of colportage, selling the New Testaments at 2s. or 2s. 6d. bound, or according to the present value of money £1 : 10s. or £1 : 17 : 6 each. And the very condemnation which in 1530 an Assembly convened by Archbishop Warham pronounced against the new version is in itself a proof of the widespread feeling in the translator's favour.

**§ 7. Further Work of Translation.**—Meanwhile Tindale was quietly continuing his work abroad. In addition to other writings "no less delectable than also most fruitful to be read," a translation of *The Five Books of Moses* was published at Marburg in 1530, followed by *The Book of Jonah* with an interesting Prologue in 1531. In the same year an attempt was made through the Royal Envoy to decoy Tindale back to England, but he would not venture. Whatever promises of safety might be made, he said, the King would never be able to protect him from the clergy, who affirmed that promises made with heretics ought not to be kept. In a subsequent interview with the same Envoy he made an eloquent and pathetic appeal on behalf of the work to which he had devoted himself. "If it would stand," he pleaded, "with the King's most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text of the Scripture to be put forth among his people . . . I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more, nor abide two days in these parts after the same ; but immediately to repair into his realm, and there most humbly submit myself at the feet of His Royal Majesty, offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yea, what death His Grace will, so that this be obtained." The plea was unsuccessful, and Tindale again resumed his wandering life. In 1533 he sustained one of his severest personal losses in the martyrdom of his "son in the faith," John Fryth ; but with undaunted spirit he continued his work. An edition of the Book of Genesis, "newly corrected and amended," and of the New

Testament were both published at Antwerp in 1534 ; to the latter of which were now added certain "Epistles," or extracts, out of the Old Testament for church use. One copy of this edition preserved in the British Museum is of great interest, as believed to be the identical copy sent by Tindale himself to Ann Boleyn. The Queen had interested herself on behalf of a certain English merchant, Richard Harman, who, in her own words to Cromwell, " did, both with his goods and policy, to his great hurt and hindrance in this world, help to the setting forth of the New Testament in English " ; and in grateful recognition the translator had this copy specially printed on vellum for her acceptance. The Queen's influence however, even if exerted, was powerless to help Tindale himself ; and in 1535 he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies by an unprincipled Englishman named Phillips.

**§ 8. Tindale's last Days and Death.**—Tindale's place of imprisonment was the Castle of Vilvorde, near Brussels, and we find him writing from there to the Governor in a letter still preserved—the only document in his handwriting known to exist<sup>1</sup>—"I entreat your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here (in Vilvorde) during the winter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me, from my goods which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head " ; and then after mentioning several other articles : "I also wish his permission to have a candle in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur, that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study." Whether this wish was granted we do not know ; nor can we tell what part he had, if any, in a folio edition of his New Testament which appeared about this

<sup>1</sup> A facsimile copy is given in Demaus' valuable work *William Tyndale, a Biography* (new edition by Lovett), p. 437.

time in England—the first portion of the sacred volume printed on English soil. It has sometimes been traced to the influence of Ann Boleyn, whom we have already found on the side of Bible-circulation; and in any case one would like to think that Tindale's closing days were cheered with the tidings of its appearance. It would be a fitting rounding-off of the work to which he had devoted himself during these twelve years of what he elsewhere pathetically describes as "mine exile out of mine natural country, and bitter absence from my friends"; the first dawn of that brighter day for which in his last words he prayed, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." On Friday 6th October 1536 this "true servant and Martyr of God . . . who for his notable pains and travail may well be called the Apostle of England in this our latter age," was strangled, and his body burned at the stake.

## CHAPTER V

## WILLIAM TINDALE—HIS WORK

1. The New Testament of 1525.
2. The Pentateuch of 1530.
3. The New Testament of 1534.
4. The New Testaments of 1535-36.

IN speaking of Tindale's life we noticed his principal Bible-translations in the order in which they appeared. We have now to return, and bring together a few facts regarding each of these.

§ 1. **The New Testament of 1525.**—Of this we have seen that two editions were issued, one in *octavo* and another in *quarto*, each consisting of three thousand copies ; but so vigorous were the steps taken for their destruction that now only the scantiest remains survive. The quarto, indeed, was believed to be wholly lost until in 1836 a London bookseller discovered a portion of it containing the Prologue and the first twenty-one chapters of St. Matthew. This precious fragment is now preserved in the Grenville Room of the British Museum. Of the octavo two copies are extant : one, wanting only the title-page, in the Baptist College at Bristol ; the other, more defective, in the Library of St. Paul's Cathedral.

On comparison the two editions prove in the matter of text to be substantially the same ; in other particulars there are considerable differences between them. Thus while the octavo has at the end only a brief address *To the Reader*, and is without notes or comments of any kind, the quarto is prefaced by a lengthy Prologue<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The opening sentences may be given in a note : "I have here

and contains many marginal notes. Both Prologue and notes bear unmistakable traces of the influence of Luther's New Testament, which was published in 1522 ; and the list appended of "The bokes conteyned in the newe Testament" follows exactly his order. That order is in some respects noteworthy. As far as the Epistle to Philemon it is the same as in our present New Testament, the books being numbered from i. to xviii. Then, still numbered, come 1st and 2nd Peter and the three Epistles of St. John ; but here the numbering ceases, and after a slight gap, marking them off, as it were, from the rest, we have the Epistles to the Hebrews, of St. James, and St. Jude, and the Revelation of St. John. In his revision, however, of 1534, it may here be mentioned, Tindale expressly claims for the Epistle of St. James that "methinketh it ought of right to be taken for Holy Scripture"; and again, after examining Luther's argument against the apostolic authority of the Hebrews, without pronouncing definitely on the authorship, he comes to the conclusion that the Epistle "ought no more to be refused for a holy, godly, and catholic than the other authentic Scriptures."

As regards the translation of the various books it will be best to defer our remarks until we come to the later revisions which represent Tindale's most finished work ; but as a specimen of the parent edition of our English New Testament, "the veritable origin of all those millions of English Scriptures now reading in so many

translated (brethren and sisters, most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ) the New Testament for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace : exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are better seen in the tongues than I, and that have higher gifts of grace to interpret the sense of the Scripture and meaning of the Spirit than I, to consider and ponder my labours, and that with the spirit of meekness. And if they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the Scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they put to their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do. For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them ; but for to bestow them unto the honouring of God and Christ, and edifying of the Congregation which is the body of Christ.

different and distant parts of the globe,”<sup>1</sup> the following verses reproduced as closely as possible from the original quarto will be of interest.

MATT. V. 13-18 (TINDALE, 1525, quarto)

Ye are ~~as~~ the salt of the erthe, but an̄ yf the salte  
be once unsavery what can be salted there with : it  
is thence forthe good for nothyng but to be cast out  
at the dores, and that men treade it under fete. Ye  
are the light of the worlde. A cite that is sett on an  
hill cannot be hyd, nether do men light a cādle and  
put it under a busshell but on a candlesticke, and it  
lighteth all those which are in the housse. Se that  
youre light so schyne before men that they maye se  
youre good werks and gloryfie youre father which is in  
heven.

Ye shall not thynke that y am come to disanull  
the lawe other the prophetts : no y am not come to  
dysanull them but to fulfyll them. For truely y say  
vnto you tyll heven and erthe perysshe one \*jott  
or one tytle of the lawe shall not scape tyll all be  
fulfylled.

~~As~~ Salte. Whē the pachers ceasse too preache godds  
worde thē muste they nedes be oppressed and trod vnder  
fote with mannes tradicions.

\* Jott. Is as moche too saie as the leest letter. For  
so is the leest letter that the grekes or the hebrues haue  
called.

The **Notes** here appended are the marginal notes or  
comments already referred to as distinguishing the quarto  
edition. One or two other examples may be given in  
modernised spelling :—

Matt. iii. 9, “Put your trust in God’s word only,  
and not in Abraham. Let saints be an example unto  
you, and not your trust and confidence, for then ye  
make Christ of them.”

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *The Annals of the English Bible*, p. 46 (1 vol.  
revised edition, 1862).

Matt. xi. 30, "My yoke. The cross is an easy thing to them that perceive the gospel."

Matt. xv. 13, "Traditions of men must fail at the last : God's word abideth ever."

**§ 2. The Pentateuch of 1530.**—From the differences of size and type in the separate books of Tindale's Pentateuch it is often believed that they were at first published separately and afterwards collected into a single volume. As further bearing this out it may be noted that each book has its own Prologue. That to Genesis is headed "A prolege shewing the vse of the scripture," and immediately follows the Preface "W. T. to the Reader." Tindale's initials are again found at the head of each page of the remaining four Prologues. As in the case of the quarto New Testament the translation is accompanied by a number of marginal notes.

The translation itself is marvellously accurate, and while largely influenced both by the Vulgate and by Luther, bears unmistakable traces of an independent study of the original Hebrew. We cannot attempt to prove this in detail here, and must content ourselves by showing rather the close relation of Tindale to our own A.V. In the following passage for the purpose of better comparison the spelling is modernised, and all differences from the A.V. distinguished by italics.

#### DEUT. vi. 4-9 (TINDALE, 1530)

Hear, Israel, The Lord *thy* God is Lord *only*, and thou shalt love the Lord *thy* God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt *whet* them *on* thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou *art at home* in thine house and *as* thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou *ripest* up ; and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand. And they shall be *papers of remembrance* between thine eyes, and shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and *upon* thy gates.

It will be seen, therefore, that out of 112 words Tindale has only 12 which differ from the version now in use ; all, with two exceptions, being changes of slight moment. The two exceptions, “*papers of remembrance*” and “*whet on*,” prove on examination to be renderings due to Luther’s influence, though in neither case does Tindale slavishly copy. In the first instance the German has only “*a remembrance*,” and in the second the verb employed denotes “*whet*” or “*sharpen*” rather than “*whet on*,” as in our own A. V. margin. In a marginal note Tindale further explains “*whet on*” as equivalent to “*sharpen, discipline, stimulate*”; and in a second note he remarks on the whole passage : “ It is heresy with us for a layman to look of God’s word, or to read it.”

It must not however be imagined, to pass to the **Notes** generally, that all are of the same tone as these. Very many, unfortunately, are of a bitterly controversial character, and how trenchant his criticisms could be the following examples will show :—

Gen. xxiv. 60 (“*And they blessed Rebecca*”).—“To bless a man’s neighbour is to pray for him, and to wish him good : and not to wag two fingers over him” (with allusion to the episcopal benediction in the Church of Rome). X

Exod. xxxii. 32 (“*If not, wipe me out of thy book*”).—“O pitiful Moses, and likewise O merciful Paul, Rom. ix. And O abominable Pope with all his merciless idols.”

Numb. xvi. 15 (“*I have not taken so much as an ass from them*”).—“Can our prelates so say?”

Numb. xxiii. 8 (“*How shall I curse*”).—“The Pope can tell how.”

Deut. xi. 19 (“*Talk of them when thou sittest*”).—“Talk of Robin Hood, say our prelates.”

Notes such as these cannot be admired, though in judging them regard must be had to the peculiar circumstances in which Tindale was placed. That, too, he himself regretted them is proved by the fact that an

entirely new set of notes, wholly of a hortatory and explanatory character, are substituted in the revised edition of Genesis published in 1534. Had Tindale succeeded in revising the other Books of the Pentateuch, he would in all probability have banished the polemical notes from them also.

But if we cannot admire the majority of Tindale's notes in their present form, nothing but unqualified praise attaches to his **Prologues**. They are amongst the most characteristic specimens of his writings, and are full of beautiful and suggestive passages. Detached sentences do them scant justice, but may give an idea of their character. This, for example, is how the Prologue to Genesis begins : "Though a man had a precious jewel and a rich, yet if he wist not the value thereof nor wherefore it served, he were neither the better nor richer of a straw. Even so though we read the Scripture and babble of it never so much, yet if we know not the use of it, and wherefore it was given, and what is therein to be sought, it profiteth us nothing at all." How again could the right use of the Jewish ceremonies be better described than in these words from the Prologue to Exodus : "Of the ceremonies, sacrifices, and tabernacle with all its glory and pomp understand that they were not permitted only, but also commanded of God ; to lead the people in the shadows of Moses and night of the Old Testament ; until the light of Christ and day of the New Testament were come : as children are led in the phantasies of youth, until the discretion of man's age become upon them." While once more the Book of Deuteronomy is pronounced to be "the most excellent of all the books of Moses. It is easy also and light and a very pure gospel, that is, to wit, a preaching of faith and love : deducing the love to God out of faith, and the love of a man's neighbour out of the love of God."

§ 3. **The New Testament of 1534.**—In the *Address* attached to his first edition (octavo) of 1525, Tindale acknowledged that the translation was by no means so perfect as he would have liked. "Count it,"

so he humbly says, “as a thing not having his full shape, but as it were born afore his time, even as a thing begun rather than finished.” And it had accordingly been his fixed aim to “give it its full shape,” and to “seek in certain places more proper English.” Circumstances for a time prevented the carrying out of his wish, until in the autumn of 1534 he was roused to immediate action. The cause was the issue by one George Joye of an edition of the New Testament which claimed to be “diligently ouersene and corrected”; but which in reality was nothing but Tindale’s translation with various changes—they cannot be called improvements—introduced from the Vulgate. Indignant at Joye who, he felt, “had not used the office of an honest man,” Tindale immediately completed his own revision, and issued it a few months later from the press of Martin Lempereur in Antwerp. The title runs:—

“The Newe Testament dylgently corrected and compared with the Greek by Willyam Tindale, and fyneshed in the yere of our Lorde God MD and xxxiiij. in the moneth of November.”

Then we have, “W. T. to the Christen reader,” seventeen pages. “A prolege into the iiii. Evangelistes,” four pages. “Willyam Tindale, yet once more, to the Christen reader,” nine pages. At the end are the Epistles taken out of the Old Testament, and a Table of Epistles and Gospels for Sundays, with “some things added” to fill up the blank pages at the end. There are woodcuts in the Book of Revelation, and some small ones at the beginning of the Gospels and several of the Epistles.

The book was thus in some respects more like a modern Church Service Book than an ordinary Testament, and everything about it bears evidence to the extreme care with which it was prepared, while the improvements introduced into the text fully justify the translator’s own claim, that he had “weeded out of it many faults which lack of help at the beginning, and oversight, did sow therein.”

This can only be shown by the help of an example ; and for convenience we may take the same passage of which we have already given the 1525 version (p. 33).

MATT. v. 13-18 (TINDALE, 1534)

Ye are the salt of the erthe : but an yf the salt have lost hir saltnes what can be salted therwith ? It is thence forthe good for nothinge but to be cast oute, and to be trodden vnder fote of men. Ye are the light of the worlde. A cite that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Nether do men lyght a candell and put it vnder a bushell but on a candelstick, and it lighteth all that are in the house. Let your light so shyne before men, that they maye se your good workes, and glorify youre father which is in heven.

Thinke not that I am come to destroye the lawe or the Prophets : no I am nott come to destroye them, but to fulfill them. For truely I saye vnto you, till heven and erthe perisse, one iott or one tytle of the lawe shall not scape, tyll all be fulfilled.

If now the two versions are compared, it will be seen that in the later version Tindale has substituted the more exact "have lost hir saltnes" for "be once unsavery" ; has omitted "at the dores" for which there is no warrant in the original ; has adopted the more literal renderings "to be trodden" and "let your light so shyne" for "that men treade" and "se that youre light so schyne" ; and finally has corrected "ye shall not thynke that y am come to disanull" into "thinke not that I am come to destroye." Or, in all, he has introduced five distinct improvements in as many sentences. It must not be thought however that the changes throughout are on an average so numerous as this ; and indeed their comparative fewness on the whole has been fairly claimed as proving the excellence of Tindale's *first* attempt.

But interesting though it is, we must not dwell on this comparison of the two editions any longer, but proceed rather to present Tindale's amended rendering of a

difficult passage from the Epistles, in order to illustrate further his skill as a translator.

PHIL. ii. 5-11 (TINDALE, 1534)

Let the same mynde be in you that was in Christ Iesu : which beyng in the shape of God, and thought it not robbery to be equall with God. Nevertheless he made him silfe of no reputacioun, and toke on him the shape of a servante, and became lyke vnto men, and was founde in his aparell as a man. He humbled him silfe and became obedient vnto the deeth, even the deeth of the crosse. Wherfore God hath exalted him, and geven him a name above all names : that in the name of Iesus shuld every knee bowe, bothe of thinges in heven and thinges in erth and thinges vnder erth, and that all tonges shuld confesse that Iesus Christ is the lorde vnto the prayse of God the father.

The student who compares this passage for himself with Purvey's rendering on p. 16 will at once remark the advance that has been made, while on the other hand he cannot fail to be struck with the number of Tindale's renderings which have kept their place in the A.V. In one important passage, "in the name of Jesus" for "at the name of Jesus," the R.V. agrees both with Purvey and Tindale as against the A.V.

To his revised Testament Tindale added also a number of marginal **Notes**, which are happily free from the controversial spirit which marked those on the Pentateuch. Thus on St. John vii. 17 he remarks, "He that loveth the will of God to keep His law ; the same understandeth the doctrine" ; on Rom. iii. 31, "Faith maintaineth the law, because thereby we obtain power to love it and to keep it" ; and on 1 Cor. xiv. 20, "All deeds must be sauced with the doctrine of God, and not with good meaning only" ; while with his comment on St. Paul's admission in Phil. iii. 13, letting us into his own inmost heart, we may fittingly take leave of the book

which Bishop Westcott has described as Tindale's "noblest monument"—"I look not upon the works that I have done, but what I lack of the perfectness of Christ."

**§ 4. The New Testaments of 1535-36.**—In 1535 there appeared what is often known as the **G.H.** Testament from the publisher's initials which are attached, and which reproduces the 1534 text, "yet once agayne corrected by Willyam Tindale." The corrections now introduced are not so numerous as between the texts of 1534 and 1525, but their very minuteness affords striking proof of the translator's continued industry and zeal.

A New Testament bearing the same date is very remarkable for its peculiar orthography, "faether" for father, "hoeme" or "hoome" for home, "yought" for youth. Various explanations of these misspellings have been offered, such as that they were purposely adapted "to the pronunciation of the peasantry" in fulfilment of Tindale's early determination; but in all probability they are due simply to the mistakes of some Flemish printer in setting up a foreign language. In this edition for the first time headings are prefixed to the chapters in the Gospels and the Acts; but the marginal notes, which had found their way into the 1534 edition, are wholly dropped. Whatever the cause,<sup>1</sup> we may be thankful that Tindale's last work, like his first, contained nothing but the "bare text of the Scripture," which, as he had repeatedly declared, was in itself enough for all the people's needs.

As proving the rapid spread of Tindale's translations it may be mentioned that in the following year, 1536, seven if not eight editions of his New Testament appeared, one of which is believed to have been the first portion of the Holy Scriptures *printed* in England;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be due to some words of Joye's, whose force Tindale could not but feel. "I would," writes Joye, "the Scriptures were so purely and plainly translated that it needed neither note, gloss, nor scholia, so that the reader might once swim without a cork."

<sup>2</sup> These and many other interesting particulars will be found in *A Bibliographical Description of the Editions of The New Testa-*

while it is further noteworthy that John Rogers printed the 1535 G.H. text almost verbatim in his Bible of 1537, through which Tindale's work has passed into our own Authorised Version.

*ment, Tyndale's Version, in English,* by Francis Fry, London, 1878.

## CHAPTER VI

### WILLIAM TINDALE—HIS INFLUENCE

1. Tindale's independence as a translator.
2. Influence on subsequent versions.
3. General estimate of Tindale.

IN following the story of Tindale's life and work we cannot fail to have been struck with the clearness with which from the first he saw what was wanted, and the marvellous steadfastness of purpose with which he sought to carry that out. The resolution formed so far back as the days at Little Sodbury, to bring the knowledge of Scripture within the reach of even the "boy that driveth the plough," was never for a moment lost sight of, and unlike many martyrs and reformers he had the satisfaction in the hour of death of knowing that his wish was in a fair way of being realised. Over the outward details of Tindale's career we can however no longer linger, but before we part from him there are one or two general points bearing on his work which must be noted, if we would estimate aright his character and influence as a translator.

**§ 1. Tindale's Independence as a Translator.**—Foremost amongst these is the question, How far in his work of translation Tindale was influenced by other workers in the same field, and more particularly by the German Testament of Luther? Sir Thomas More, for example, who during Tindale's lifetime had been specially commissioned to attack his translation, asserts that "at the time of his translation of the New Testament Tindale was with Luther at Wittenberg, and the confederacy between him and Luther was well known";

an assertion which Tindale meets with the direct denial, “When he (More) saith Tindale was confederate with Luther, that is not truth.”

A careful comparison moreover of the respective texts amply confirms this denial. For though it is clear that Tindale had Luther’s Testament before him as he worked, and borrowed freely from his Prefaces and marginal notes, it is equally clear that in the matter of the text he took up a wholly independent attitude, and used Luther and all other aids within his reach “as a master, and not as a disciple.” That he had a right to do so, all that we can gather regarding his personal scholarship abundantly proves. His bitter opponent Cochlæus speaks both of him and his associate at Cologne as “learned, skilful in languages, and eloquent”; George Joye, against whom he had such just cause of complaint, admits his “high learning in his Hebrew, Greek, Latin,” etc.; while an eminent German scholar, Herman Buschius, describes him as “so skilled in seven languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, French, that whichever he spoke you would suppose it his native tongue.”

We have no difficulty therefore in accepting the conclusion that to Tindale belongs the undoubted honour of being the first in England at any rate (with the possible exception of Bede) of going straight to the Hebrew and Greek originals; while his subsequent alterations and revisions all bear witness to his anxiety to bring his translation into ever closer approximation to these.<sup>1</sup>

How far in so translating, his language was influenced by previous *English* versions, it is more difficult to say

<sup>1</sup> Tindale’s Hebrew scholarship has sometimes been strangely called in question; but even granting that he may not have had much acquaintance with the language when he left England, he must very soon have acquired it. The testimonies just cited alone prove this, and are supported by his own notes in his Pentateuch on peculiar Hebrew words, and by the clear way in which he elsewhere remarks on the properties of the Hebrew tongue. Nor in his *Answer to More* could he have spoken in the way that he does of the Hebrew text as “most of need to be known” unless he had himself been familiar with it.

precisely. We have on the one hand his own statement that he "had no man to counterfeit, neither was holpen with English of any that had interpreted the same or such like thing in the Scripture beforetime"; while on the other hand the most cursory comparison of his renderings with Purvey's revision reveals an identity of language and expression which it is difficult to reconcile with total independence. Dr. Moulton has however pointed out that in many cases the Vulgate supplies the connecting link, and that in others the explanation probably is that the earlier Wycliffite renderings had passed into general currency, and become almost proverbial phrases.<sup>1</sup> In using these in his translation Tindale may therefore have been more indebted to Wycliffe and his successor than he was himself aware of; and in the same general sense we may at once accept the words of the editors of *The Wycliffite Versions*, that at the period of the Reformation these versions "supplied an example and a model to those excellent men, who in like manner devoted themselves at the hazard of their lives to the translation of Scripture, and to its publication among the people of the land."

**§ 2. Influence on subsequent Versions.**—If however Tindale was thus in the main independent of previous translators, his influence on all who succeeded him is direct and unmistakable. Indeed we are probably not overstating the case when we say that all future translations of the English Bible are in the main little else than *revisions* of his work so far as it had gone. We shall meet with frequent examples of this in the chapters that follow; but in the meantime it may not be out of place to indicate briefly one or two of the sources of his power.

Thus it is he who has given us our *religious vocabulary*. In the whole of Tindale's New Testament it has been estimated that the number of strange words, that

<sup>1</sup> Obvious examples are the use of "mote" and "beam" in both versions in Matt. vii. 3, and their common description of the "strait gate," and the "narrow" way, a few verses farther on.

is, words which are not found in our Authorised Version, is probably below 350, and many of these occur only once or twice. What is more important, in the general character of the Bible diction, its union of stateliness and homeliness, of majesty and sweetness, we may still see “a reflection of the high purpose which evoked the effort. Our Bible translation actually generated a new dialect in the English language ; it produced the happiest type of diction that ever grew upon the prolific stock of our mother tongue.”<sup>1</sup> X

But Tindale did more than give his successors words in which to translate ; he showed them also the *spirit* in which alone the work ought to be entered on. His singleness of aim, his noble self-forgetfulness, his honesty of purpose, stand revealed on every page of his work. “I call God to record,” so he writes to his friend Fryth in 1532, “against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God’s word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.” And in the last words which we have from him regarding his work he says : “As concerning all I have translated or otherwise written, I beseech all men to read it for that purpose I wrote it, even to bring them to the knowledge of the Scripture. And as far as the Scripture approveth it, so far to allow it, and if in any place the word of God disallow it, there to refuse it, as I do before our Saviour Christ and His Congregation.”

Bishop Westcott is therefore not doing more than giving Tindale his due when he writes : “He toiled faithfully himself, and where he failed he left to those who should come after the secret of success. The achievement was not for one but for many ; but he fixed the type according to which the later labourers worked. His influence decided that our Bible should be popular and not literary, speaking in a simple dialect, and that so by its simplicity it should be endowed with permanence.”

<sup>1</sup> Earle, *The Psalter of the Great Bible of 1539*, Introd. p. xlvi.

**§ 3. Estimate of Tindale as a Translator.**—In view of a testimony such as that, it is an ungracious task to point out wherein Tindale's translations failed, and yet it would be idle, of course, to pretend that he fell into no mistakes. Many of his renderings are incorrect, others are uncouth, others are paraphrases rather than translations. Serious faults too are his constant disregard of connecting particles ("and," "for," etc.), his neglect of the Greek article, and his habit of translating the same Greek word in different ways in the same sentence—a habit in which the translators of the Authorised Version unfortunately followed him. Thus, to illustrate this last point only, all must feel how inferior in force is his rendering of Matt. xxi. 41 in the 1534 Testament, "He will *cruelly* destroy those *evil* persons," to our revised "He will *miserably* destroy those *miserable* men"; or of 1 Cor. iii. 17, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy," to "If any man *destroyeth* the temple of God, him shall God *destroy*." On the other hand, in not a few instances where the Authorised Version has introduced an unnecessary change, Tindale has kept up the connection of the Greek, as "Our *ableness* cometh of God, which hath made us *able* to minister the new testament" ("*sufficiency*," "*able*," Authorised Version), 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6; and "About the *seat* were xxiiii *seats*" ("*throne*," "*seats*," Authorised Version), Rev. iv. 4.

No more convincing proof indeed of Tindale's marvellous care and exactness on the whole can be given than the number of places in which the revisers of 1881 have gone back to his renderings in preference to those adopted in the Authorised Version; while it must not be forgotten that in many places where they differ, the fault lay not with Tindale, but with the inferior Greek text with which he had to work.

Take it all in all, his translation is a noble one, and Fuller's eulogy is not exaggerated: "What he undertook was to be admired as glorious; what he performed, to be commended as profitable; wherein he failed, is to

be excused as pardonable, and to be scored on the account rather of that age, than of the author himself." Or in the eloquent words of Mr. Froude : "The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it—the mingled tenderness and majesty—the Saxon simplicity—the preternatural grandeur—unparalleled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, William Tyndal."

## CHAPTER VII

## MILES COVERDALE

1. Early years.
2. Description of Bible of 1535.
3. Coverdale as a translator.
4. Specimens of translation.
5. New editions.
6. Closing years and death.

WHEN in 1530 Warham's Assembly formally condemned the use of Tindale's New Testament,<sup>1</sup> all hope of an authorised vernacular translation was not thereby destroyed. On the contrary, it was at the same time distinctly stated that the King had been led to take this step lest "the divulging of this Scripture at this time in the English tongue" should tend rather to the people's "further confusion and destruction than the edification of their souls"; but that he himself would have the New Testament "by learned men faithfully and purely translated," and so ready to be given forth at a more convenient season. It may be questioned whether Henry ever really contemplated the fulfilment of his promise; but in any case it was not forgotten by others. Towards the close of the same year a singularly noble letter was addressed to him by Hugh Latimer, in which the bold reformer called upon the King to implement his promise "even to-day before to-morrow." "And take heed," so he continued, "whose counsels your Grace doth take in this matter, that you may do that God commandeth, and not that seemeth good in your own sight without the Word of God; that your Grace may be found acceptable in His sight, and one of the members of His Church; and, according to the office

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 28

that he hath called your Grace unto, you may be found a faithful minister of His gifts, and not a defender of His faith ; for He will not have it defended by man or man's power, but by His Word only, by the which He hath evermore defended it, and that by a way far above man's power, or reason, as all the stories of the Bible make mention."

To the same end, a few years later, a Convocation presided over by Cranmer, the recently-appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, petitioned that "His Majesty would vouchsafe to decree that the Sacred Scriptures should be translated into the English tongue by certain honest and learned men, named for that purpose by His Majesty, and should be delivered to the people according to their learning." We are not told the result of this petition—possibly, in the then heated and divided state of public opinion, it may never have been presented to the King at all ; but, emboldened by its tone, Cranmer set about the work of translation himself, dividing the Bible into different parts, and soliciting the aid of the most learned bishops and others. His project came to nothing ; but meanwhile there had been quietly working away on the Continent a scholar whose labours were to have a marked influence on the whole future of Bible-translation. His name was **Miles Coverdale**, and his story, so far as bearing upon the subject before us, is quickly told.

**§ 1. Early Years.**—Miles Coverdale was born in the year 1488 in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and is described as "from his childhood given to learning, wherein he profited much." At a fitting age he was attached to the Augustine Monastery at Cambridge, from which we find him writing, probably in 1527, to Cromwell, into whose good graces he had got : "For now I begin to taste of Holy Scriptures ; now, honour be to God ! I am set to the most sweet smell of holy letters."

Shortly afterwards Coverdale united himself with the reforming party, and in consequence, in 1529, had to cross the Channel for safety. According to Foxe, he joined Tindale at Hamburg, "and helped him in the

translating of the whole five books of Moses." Opinions vary as to how far this statement is to be literally understood ; there can, however, be little doubt that about this time the two scholars did meet, and that Coverdale's zeal in the work of translation received a fresh impulse. The result was seen when in 1534, acting apparently on the advice of Cromwell, who saw the turn that things were taking, he was ready "to set forth" his translation, and on 4th October 1535 the *first complete printed English Bible* was issued. For it will be kept in view that Wycliffe's Bible, though complete, was only in MS. ; and that Tindale's, though printed, was complete only so far as the New Testament was concerned. All that we can learn therefore regarding this volume cannot fail to be of interest. The astonishing thing is that so much of its history is still, to a great extent, matter of conjecture.

**§ 2. Description of Bible of 1535.**—In size Coverdale's Bible was a small folio, printed, probably at Zurich, in angular black type, fifty-seven lines going to each page. The original title ran as follows :—

"**Biblia, The Bible : that is, the Holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe, MDXXXV.**"

The English printer, however, into whose hands the sheets had passed, for some reason substituted a new title-page of his own in which all reference to "Douche and Latyn" was omitted. He also added several extra pages of preliminary matter, including a Dedication to the King, couched, according to the custom of the times, in terms of most fulsome flattery, and a Prologue to the Christian Reader. Both Dédication and Prologue were signed by Coverdale.

The body of the book was divided into six parts.

1. Genesis to Deuteronomy.
2. Joshua to Esther.
3. Job to Solomon's Ballads (the Song of Solomon).
4. Isaiah to Malachi including the apocryphal book of Baruch.
5. The Apocrypha omitting the Prayer of

Manasseh. 6. The New Testament. Each book was accompanied by a summary of its contents arranged according to chapters,<sup>1</sup> while a short Preface was attached to the Apocrypha, in which the following noteworthy words occur : "But whosoever thou be that readest Scripture, let the Holy Ghost be thy teacher, and let one text expound another unto thee. As for such dreams, visions, and dark sentences as be hid from thy understanding, commit them unto God, and make no articles of them ; but let the plain text be thy guide, and the Spirit of God (which is the author thereof) shall lead thee in all truth."

§ 3. **Coverdale as a Translator.**—When we pass to the internal character of the version, the first point that meets us is the position of Coverdale as a translator. Did he, like Tindale, as is sometimes asserted, go direct to the original texts, or was his work founded on the translations of others? His own words leave no doubt as to the answer. For not only have we his statement on the original title-page that he translated "out of Douche [German] and Latyn" ; but in his Dedication to the King he speaks of having "with a clear conscience purely and faithfully translated this out of five sundry interpreters"—now generally identified with Luther, the Zurich Bible, the Vulgate, a Latin version by Pagninus, and in all probability Tindale. It would lie altogether beyond our present purpose to attempt to indicate Coverdale's special obligation to each of these. But he himself has thrown an interesting sidelight on his relative dependence which deserves notice. In his Prologue to the Christian Reader, after referring to the Latin translations from which he had received help, he goes on to speak of "the Dutch interpreters,

<sup>1</sup> The summary for example of Matt. v. ran : "In this chapter and in the two next following is contained the most excellent and loving Sermon of Christ on the Mount: Which sermon is the very key that openeth the understanding into the law. In this fifth chapter specially He preacheth of the viii. beatitudes or blessings, of manslaughter, wrath and anger: of adultery, of swearing, of suffering wrong, and of love even towards a man's enemies."

whom (because of their singular gifts and special diligence in the Bible) I have been the more glad to follow *for the most part*,<sup>1</sup> according as I was required." The German translations of Luther and the Zurich Bible may thus, according to his own admission, be taken as the basis of Coverdale's work—a conclusion which the independent examination of his text amply supports. To show this in any detail could hardly be of interest to the ordinary reader; but we may cite one or two short passages, which will at least give a general idea of the character of Coverdale's translation.

**§ 4. Specimens of Translation.**—We begin with one, of which Tindale's rendering has already been given on p. 34, marking the principal differences from it by means of italics.

DEUT. vi. 4-9 (COVERDALE, 1535)

Hear, *O* Israel, the Lord *our* God is *one* Lord only. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all *thy* heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, *shalt thou take* to heart, and *shalt* whet them *upon* thy children, and *shalt* talk of them, when thou *sittest* in thine house, and *when* thou walkest by the way: when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be *a token* of remembrance *before* thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of *thine* house, and upon thy gates.

Our second passage is chosen simply for its familiarity. The italics again indicate the principal variations from Tindale (New Testament, 1534).

MATT. xiii. 3-8 (COVERDALE, 1535)

And He spake many things *unto* them in similitudes, saying: Behold, The sower went forth to sow: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside: *Then* came the fowls, and *ate* it up. Some fell upon stony

<sup>1</sup> The italics are ours.

ground, and anon it sprung up, because it had no depth of earth: *But when the Sun arose*, it caught heat: and *for so much as it had no root*, it withered away. Some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it. Some fell upon good ground, and gave fruit: some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.

In both these passages, it will be noticed, the variations from Tindale are fairly numerous, on an average about two variations a verse, while, in support of what has already been stated, it is important to notice that in almost every one of these Coverdale is found to be in agreement with Luther. Such a rendering, however, as “gave” in the last verse is due, not to the German, but the Latin. It is necessary to add that other passages would bring out a much closer relation to Tindale than is here indicated.<sup>1</sup>

For our third and last specimen of Coverdale’s translation we may turn to the Prophetic Books, in which he had not the benefit of Tindale’s guidance. The influence of the German translators, more particularly of the Zurich Bible, is again unmistakable.

### ISAIAH liii. 1-5 (COVERDALE, 1535)

But who giveth credence unto our preaching? Or to whom is the arm of the Lord known? He shall grow before the Lord like as a branch, and as a root in a dry ground. He shall have neither beauty nor favour. When we look upon Him, there shall be no fairness: we shall have no lust unto Him. He shall be the most simple and despised of all, which yet hath good experience of sorrows and infirmities. We shall reckon Him so simple and so vile, that we shall hide our faces from Him. Howbeit (of a truth) He only taketh away our infirmity, and beareth our pain:

<sup>1</sup> Thus in the Epistle of St. James containing 108 verses, Dr. Moulton, to whom belongs the honour of being the first to point out this varying relation between the two versions, finds that the difference amounts to three words only (*History*, p. 111).

Yet we shall judge Him, as though He were plagued and cast down of God : whereas He (notwithstanding) shall be wounded for our offences, and smitten for our wickedness. For the pain of our punishment shall be laid upon Him, and with His stripes shall we be healed.

Many other interesting particulars regarding Coverdale's translation might be brought forward if space permitted, but enough has been said to show that, while not an independent translator, he was certainly not a mere "proof reader or corrector" of the first English Bible. His relation, we have seen, was on the whole distinctly closer to the German versions than to Tindale ; but it is obvious that he made careful and discriminating use of the different aids within his reach, and that his work, if only for the happy turn which he gives to many phrases and sentences, and which is often so slight as at first sight to be hardly noticeable, possesses undoubted original value. "The gentle flow of its English," says Dr. Eadie, "is idiomatic and fresh, though many words and phrases are now antiquated,<sup>1</sup> and it may still be read with pleasure in the Psalms of the English Book of Common Prayer, of which it is the basis. . . . No little of that indefinable quality that gives popular charm to our English Bible, and has endeared it to so many generations, is owing to Coverdale. . . . Tyndale gave us the first great outline distinctly and wonderfully etched, but Coverdale added those minuter touches which soften and harmonize it."

**§ 5. New Editions.**—Special mention is here made of Coverdale's Psalter, but it may be well to delay consideration of it, until we meet it in its revised form in the Great Bible, and in the meantime to notice one or two new editions of his Bible as a whole. Thus in

<sup>1</sup> From one of these, "There is no more Triacle at Galaad" (Jer. viii. 22) Coverdale's translation is sometimes called "The Treacle Bible." Other examples are : "Bare it in hir nebb" (Gen. viii. 11); "Brake his brane panne" (Judg. ix. 53); "The foolish bodyes saye in their hertes: Tush, there is no God" (Psa. xiv. 1); "Because their wyddowes were not loked vpon in the daylie handreachinge" (Acts vi. 1).

1537 a second edition appeared, "imprynted in Sowthwarke for James Nycolson," and claiming to have been "newly ouersene and corrected." The variations are said to be slight and unimportant, and the chief interest of the edition for us lies in the fact that it was the first complete Bible *printed in England*. It contained the same Dedication to Henry VIII. as its predecessor had done, but "Quene Jane" now takes the place of the "dearest just wyfe and most vertuous Pryncesse Queen Anne." In the same year Nycolson issued a *quarto* edition, which bore on its title-page the significant words, now introduced for the first time, "Set forth with the Kynges most gracious licence."

The following year, 1538, found Coverdale engaged in biblical work in Paris, and the fruit was seen in a Latin-English Testament, of which in the one year three editions were called for. A copy of this Testament, preserved in the British Museum, is of interest as having been the property of Queen Elizabeth. It contains the following entry in the Queen's own hand:—

"Amonge good things  
I prove and finde, the quiet  
life doth muche abounde,  
and sure to the contentid  
mynde, ther is no riches  
may be founde.

Your lovinge  
maistres  
Elizabeth."<sup>1</sup>

**§ 6. Closing Years and Death.**—We shall return to Coverdale again as a translator in connection with the story of the Great Bible, but may briefly summarise here the closing incidents of his life. He was in England apparently in 1539, but, after the death of Cromwell on the scaffold in July 1540, returned to Germany, living first at Tübingen and afterwards at Bergzabern, where he is spoken of as "of very great service in pro-

<sup>1</sup> Dore, *Old Bibles*, pp. 95-6.

moting the Scriptural benefit of those persons in the lower ranks of life who are anxious for the truth, and inflamed with zeal and desire of obeying the will of God.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1548 he came back to England, and three years later was made Bishop of Exeter during Edward VI.’s reign ; but on Mary’s accession was deprived of his see. He had again to go into exile, visiting among other places Geneva. After his return he held the living of St. Magnus the Martyr in London ; but lost this in the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, apparently because he would not obey the Act of Uniformity. He still preached however occasionally, and evidently with great acceptance, for, according to the chronicler, “many people ran after Father Coverdale,” coming even “to his house to ask where he would preach the next Lord’s Day,” when he tried to keep it secret. He died in February

1569 at the age of eighty-one years.

Coverdale’s character differed in many respects from that of his great predecessor Tindale. He had not the latter’s sturdy independence, nor was the work of translation with him, as with Tindale, a consuming passion that had to be obeyed. On the contrary, as he tells us himself in his Prologue, “it was neither my labour nor desire, to have this work put in my hand,” but “when I was instantly required, though I could not do so well as I would, I thought it yet my duty to do my best, and that with a good will.”

He has been described as “an honest and well-meaning, but a very ordinary plodding sort of man, like whom there can be ten thousand found any day in London, with no remarkable ability for either good or evil.” “But,” as Dr. Eadie, who quotes this testimony, remarks, “whatever his ability, Coverdale did his own work when none of the ‘ten thousand’ thought of attempting it ; and though his talent was certainly not transcendent, it qualified him to be the first to give a whole Bible to the English people, and to edit the Great Bible, which for so many years occupied a high place.”

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Mombert, *English Versions of the Bible*, p. 160.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MATTHEW'S BIBLE—TAVERNER'S BIBLE

1. "John Rogers *alias* Matthew." 2. Matthew's Bible.  
3. Notes and Concordance. 4. The first Authorised Version. 5. Martyrdom of Rogers. 6. Taverner's Bible.

THE English people had waited long before a complete copy of the Scriptures in English was placed in their hands; but now, thanks to the noble example of Tindale and Coverdale, translation was to follow translation in rapid succession. It may not be out of place therefore to refer here to some words of the latter on the advantage of many versions. "Divers translations," so he writes, "understand one another and that in the head articles and ground of our most blessed faith, though they use sundry words. Therefore methink we have great occasion to give thanks unto God, that He hath opened unto His church the gift of interpretation and of printing, and that there are now at this time so many which with such diligence and faithfulness interpret the Scripture to the honour of God and edifying of His people." And then after referring to his own translation he continues: "If thou (reader) hast knowledge therefore to judge where any fault is made, I doubt not but thou wilt help to amend it, if love be joined with thy knowledge. Howbeit whereinsoever I can perceive by myself or by the information of other that I have failed (as it is no wonder) I shall now by the help of God overlook it better and amend it."

We have seen already something of Coverdale's own

efforts in the work of revision. Another worker in the same field now appears.

§ 1. "**John Rogers alias Matthew.**" In 1537, the very year of Coverdale's own second edition, a Bible was issued with the title :—

"The Byble, which is all the holy Scripture : In whych are contained the Olde and Newe Testament truly and purely translated into Englysh by Thomas Matthew."

This is followed by a verse from Isaiah i. : "Hearcken to ye heauens and thou earth geaue eare : for the Lorde speaketh," and the note, "M,D,xxxvii, Set forth with the Kinges most gracyous lycēce." The place of printing is not mentioned, though it is now believed to have been Antwerp, and the whole question of authorship is still to a certain extent uncertain. For while the Dedication to Henry VIII. again bears the signature of Thomas Matthew, this is followed by a brief "Exhortacyon to the studye of the holy Scripture," signed with the initials I. R., generally supposed to stand for John Rogers, the proto-martyr in the Marian persecutions. Opinions differ as to whether in Matthew and Rogers we are to see one person or two ; but on the whole, in our otherwise complete ignorance regarding Matthew, and looking to the fact that in the official sentence pronounced against him, Rogers is distinctly referred to as "John Rogers, otherwise called Matthew," we are warranted in concluding that we have here two different designations of the same person. The *alias* may, as Foxe suggests, have been adopted by Rogers for prudential motives to hide his connection with Tindale.

§ 2. **Matthew's Bible.**—The circumstances attending this connection we owe to the same authority. Rogers, so Foxe tells us, who had been educated at Cambridge, where "he was profitably exercised in learning," after filling various posts in this country, was in 1534 appointed Chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers at Antwerp. Both Tindale and Coverdale happened to

be there at the same time, and "in conferring with them on the Scriptures, he came to a great knowledge in the gospel of God . . . and joined himself with them in that painful [difficult] and most profitable labour of translating the Bible into the English tongue." If we are to take these words literally, we must think of the three men as all engaged together in the one work of translation and revision, the results of which Rogers afterwards gave to the world. But possibly Foxe's words are not more than a loose way of indicating the extent to which Rogers availed himself of the labours of his two predecessors. For the slightest examination of his version proves that in the Pentateuch he has almost literally followed Tindale's published translation, and in the New Testament the same writer's Testament of 1535; while the Old Testament books from Ezra to Malachi are equally closely taken from Coverdale.

There remains only the section from Joshua to Chronicles, which is evidently *not* Coverdale's, and the question may be asked, Have we here then Rogers' own work, or can we again trace the hand of Tindale? The latter alternative is now generally accepted. It will be remembered that when Tindale was in prison he made a special request for his Hebrew Bible and Dictionary for the purpose, there is good reason to believe, of completing his translation of the Old Testament. He was not able to accomplish that; but the coincidences in matter and manner of translation between this section of Matthew's Bible and Tindale's Pentateuch are such as to render it more than probable that we have here Tindale's unfinished work. What more natural than that the translator, seeing his own death approaching, should have handed over all he had been able to accomplish to his friend Rogers to make what use of it he could? We may thus accept almost literally the statement quoted by Lewis regarding this edition that "to the end of the Book of Chronicles it is Tyndal's translation, and from thence to the end of the Apocrypha, Coverdale's, and that the whole New Testament is

\* Tyndal's."<sup>1</sup> Or, roughly speaking, two-thirds of Matthew's Bible are Tindale's, and one-third Coverdale's.

It is right, however, to add that if Rogers is thus reduced to the position simply of an editor, he did his work carefully and well. Thus in the Psalter he introduced various readings in the margin, besides accommodating the numbering of the Psalms to the Hebrew division. In Psalm xiv. he omitted certain spurious verses introduced by Coverdale, and in Psalm cxix. headed the different sections by the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; while his scholarship was further proved by the explanation of various technical terms. This, for example, is what he has to say regarding the word *Selah* which so often puzzles readers of the Psalms: "This word, after Rabbi Kimchi, was a sign or token of lifting up the voice, and also a monition and advertisement to enforce the thought and mind earnestly to give heed to the meaning of the verse unto which it is added. Some will that it signify perpetually or verily."

**§ 3. Notes and Concordance.**—It is in his **Notes** indeed that the most characteristic feature of Rogers' work is found. They are very numerous, and of all kinds, as the following notes on Deut. i. will show.

Deut. i. 6, "Horeb and Sinai are both one."

Deut. i. 21 ("Before Thee").—"That is, at Thy Commandment."

Deut. i. 26 ("But were disobedient").—"The people, being unfaithful, would not go unto the land promised."

Deut. i. 27 ("Hate us").—"God is said to hate a man when He putteth him forth of His heart, and giveth him not of His grace. Psal. v. b and xxx. b."

Deut. i. 43 ("Ye would not hear").—"Here thou

<sup>1</sup> *History of the English Translations of the Bible*, p. 107. The one exception is the Prayer of Manasseh in the Apocrypha which Coverdale had not translated, and which may therefore be set down to Rogers himself.

seest the very image of us that live in this most perilous time, for even we likewise, where God's word is, there believe we not; and where it is not, there be we bold."

Or to select one or two examples from the New Testament.

Matt. i. 18 ("Christ").—"In Hebr. Messiah: It signifieth anointed. Jesus Christ, then, is the earnest and pledge of God's promise, by whom the grace and favour of God is promised to us with the Holy Ghost, which illumineth, lighteth, reneweth our hearts to fulfil the law."

John v. 2 ("Slaughter house").—"The Greek hath *sheep house*, a place where they killed the beasts that were offered."

Jas. ii. 24 ("Justified").—"You see then that of deeds a man is justified, that is, is declared just, is openly known to be righteous, like as by the fruits the good tree is known for good. Otherwise may not this sentence be interpreted. . . ."

Rogers' Protestantism is still more clearly seen in other places, as when he declares that reward, Matt. v. 12, "is given to men for their work, but it is not due to the work," or describes faith, Matt. ix. 2, as "the righteousness of a Christian man, which setteth at peace the conscience, and receiveth the heritage everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

Along with his notes, Rogers adds to the usefulness of his work by generally prefixing a heading to each chapter. The Apocryphal books are introduced by a Preface translated from Olivetan's French Bible; and in the New Testament Tindale's Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans is reprinted. Amongst the preliminary matter there is also, again from Olivetan, a "Table of

<sup>1</sup> An interesting proof of the animosity which such-like annotations aroused in the papal party is afforded by a copy of Rogers' original edition preserved in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society. For not only is the sacred volume itself in a sadly torn and mutilated condition, but the objectionable notes have as far as possible been effaced by a strong red pigment.

the principal matters contained in the Bible." For example, under the word "Advocate" the remark is made : " Note that I find not in all the Bible this word advocate, but only in 1 John ii. a, in the which place is said that Christ is our advocate toward the Father." The Table thus formed a kind of *Concordance*, and in any case it is interesting to know that from the study of Matthew's Bible the first English Concordance sprang.

It was the work of Marbeck, one of the organists of St. George's, Windsor. Too poor to buy a copy of the new version for himself, he borrowed one from amongst his friends, and began to copy it out "on fair great paper." He had got as far as the beginning of Joshua when, according to his own account, " my friend, Master Turner, chanced to steal upon me unawares, and seeing me writing out the Bible, asked me what I meant thereby. And when I told him the cause : ' Tush ! ' said he, ' thou goest about a vain and tedious labour. But this were a profitable work for thee, to set out a Concordance in English.' ' A Concordance,' said I, ' what is that ? ' Then he told me it was a book to find out any word in the whole Bible by the letter, and that there was such an one in Latin already." Marbeck accordingly borrowed a Latin Concordance and set to work, and, though he narrowly escaped martyrdom for his pains, he was able to bring out the completed work in 1550 with the title : " A Concordance, that is to saie, a Worke wherein, by the ordre of the letters A, B, C, ye maie redely find any word conteigned in the whole Bible, so often as it is there expressed or mentioned."

\* § 4. **The first Authorised Version.**— Apart from other interesting associations, Matthew's Bible has one special claim upon our attention. On its title-page, it will be remembered, it bore the words, " Set forth with the Kinges most gracyous lycēe," and may thus be regarded as the *first authorised version* of the sacred Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> This came about as follows. No sooner

<sup>1</sup> In this same year of 1537 the royal license was obtained for the second edition of Coverdale's Bible. See above, p. 55.

had it been published than Cranmer forwarded a copy to Cromwell with a letter in which he spoke of the book as "very well done," and that as far as the translation went he liked it "better than any other translation heretofore made." He then urged Cromwell to show the book to the King and obtain from him a "license that the same may be sold and read of every person, without danger of any act, proclamation, or ordinance heretofore granted to the contrary, until such time that we, the Bishops, shall set forth a better translation—which I think will not be till a day after Doomsday." That Henry should grant this request was almost more than Cranmer could have dared to hope; for the King could not but know that a large part of the Bible was that very version of Tindale's he had already condemned more than once. But, whatever the reason, Henry yielded, and so it came about that "by Cranmer's petition, by Crumwell's influence, and by Henry's authority, without any formal ecclesiastical decision, the book was given to the English people, which is the foundation of the text of our present Bible. From Matthew's Bible—itself a combination of the labours of Tyndale and Coverdale—all later revisions have been successively formed."<sup>1</sup> We shall see this more clearly in the pages that follow. In the meantime we have to notice the fate of the man by whom the Bible was produced.

**§ 5. Martyrdom of Rogers.**—In the troublous times of Queen Mary's reign, so prominent a Protestant leader as Rogers could hardly expect to escape, and accordingly in August 1553 he was ordered by the Council to remain in his own house as a prisoner. Later, through the intervention of Bonner, he was removed to Newgate, where he was detained among thieves and murderers for nearly eighteen months, when he was brought up for examination before Lord Chancellor Gardiner. No direct mention of his publication of the Scriptures seems to have occurred in the charge against him; but the care with which Gardiner in passing

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *History*, p. 73.

sentence no less than three times named “Rogers otherwise called Matthew” may have been intended to point to the version called by his name. In any case his doom was fixed. On the morning of Monday 4th February 1555 he was suddenly awakened and told to prepare himself for the fire. He received the news with perfect calmness, and, after being “degraded” by Bonner, proceeded towards Smithfield, repeating the 51st Psalm by the way, “all the people wonderfully rejoicing at his constancy, with great praises and thanks to God for it.” His last words, as the flames enveloped him, were, “Lord, receive my spirit.” “He was,” says Foxe, “the first martyr of all the blessed company that suffered in Queen Mary’s time at the fire” and “constantly and cheerfully took his death with wonderful patience in the defence of Christ’s gospel.”

§ 6. **Taverner’s Bible.**—Before parting from Rogers it may be well to notice here another Bible, which was closely connected with his version. It was the work of one Richard Taverner, and bears traces throughout of his original and somewhat quaint personality. In his early years Taverner was connected with Cardinal College, Oxford, and along with certain other young men was imprisoned in the College cellar for reading Tindale’s New Testament. He owed his release, it is said, to his skill in music. He afterwards went to the Inner Temple in London, “where his humour was to quote the law in Greek when he read anything thereof.” In 1534 he was taken into the attendance of Cromwell, by whom he was promoted a few years later to be Clerk of the Signet to Henry VIII. During the reign of Henry’s successor, Taverner, though a layman, received a license to preach, and a curious description has been preserved of his appearing in the pulpit of St. Mary’s, Oxford, with a gold chain about his neck, and a sword by his side. His sermon, if we may judge from its opening words, can hardly have tended greatly to edification: “Arriving at the Mount of St. Mary’s, in the stony stage where I now

stand, I have brought you some fine biscuits, baked in the oven of charity, and carefully conserved for the chickens of the church, the sparrows of the Spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation."

Taverner's translation, undertaken apparently at the instigation of Cromwell, was published in 1539, and bore to be "newly recognised with great diligence after most faythful exemplars." The preliminary matter was practically the same as in Matthew's Bible, but there was a new Dedication to the King in much better taste. "This one thing," he says, "I dare full well affirm, that among all your Majesty's deservings . . . your Highness never did anything more acceptable unto God, more profitable unto the advancement of true Christianity, more unpleasant to the enemies of the same, and also to your Grace's enemies, than when your Majesty licensed and willed the most sacred Bible, containing the unspotted and lively word of God, to be in the English tongue set forth to your Highness's subjects."

The changes which Taverner introduces in the Old Testament, mostly from the Vulgate, call for no special remark ; others in the New Testament are significant, as when he gives its full force to the definite article in John i. 9, 21, "That was *the* true light," "Art thou *the* prophet?" ("a true light," "a prophet," *Tind.* 1534). As a rule, however, Taverner's corrections are due not so much to textual considerations, as to the desire to give more pointed forcible renderings. Thus in Matt. xiii. 41 he substitutes "grieves" for "things that offend" ; in xxi. 17 "lodged" for "had his abiding" ; and in xxii. 12 "had never a word to say," for "was even speechless." In these last two chapters Dr. Moulton finds in all about forty variations, of which one-third are retained in the Authorised Version ; but the general influence of Taverner's Bible on subsequent versions cannot be said to have been great, and we must pass on to the **Great Bible**, which was to succeed Matthew's as the authorised version for a period of nearly thirty years.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GREAT BIBLE

1. Origin of the Great Bible.
2. Title and Title-page.
3. Translation and text.
4. The Psalter.
5. New editions.
6. Reception in England.
7. Instances of intolerance.

§ 1. **Origin of the Great Bible.**—Although Henry VIII. had permitted both Matthew's and Coverdale's Bibles of 1537 to be set forth with his "most gracious license," we must not therefore regard the King as an ardent advocate on their behalf. Any credit in this direction must rather be given to his great minister Thomas Cromwell, who, since his patronage of Coverdale in the early days of his career, had proved himself the steady friend of Bible-translation. But with neither of these versions was Cromwell yet satisfied. Matthew's was disfigured by its objectionable notes; while Coverdale's translation had been proved in many respects unsatisfactory. Accordingly early in 1538 he applied to Coverdale to undertake a wholly new revision, using Matthew's Bible as his basis. It says much for the nobility of Coverdale's spirit that he showed no signs of resentment at his own previous work being thus set aside, but at once along with one Grafton proceeded to Paris, where it had been determined that the new edition should be brought out. By means of a letter from Henry, a special license for the printing was obtained from the King of France, and on 23rd June 1538 the two editors were able to write to Cromwell: "We be entered into your work of the Bible, whereof (according to our most bounden duty) we have

here sent unto your lordship two ensamples, one in parchment, wherein we intend to print one for the King's grace, and another for your lordship, and the second in paper, whereof all the rest shall be made." From time to time similar notices showing the progress of the work were sent, and in view of the opposition with which it was "daily threatened" notwithstanding the King's license, care was taken to dispatch the sheets as fast as possible, when ready, to England. The prudence of this step was justified, for just as the whole work was approaching completion the Inquisitor-General stepped in, forbade the printing, and seized the remaining sheets. Coverdale and Grafton escaped to England, but shortly afterwards, encouraged by Cromwell, made bold to return and convey the presses, types, and workmen to London. And as "four great dry vats-full" of the precious sheets were also recovered from a haberdasher to whom, instead of being burned, they had been sold "to lap his caps in," the work was soon finished, and in April 1539 the Bible—hereafter to be known as the Great Bible—was issued from the press.

§ 2. **Title and Title-page.**—The volume was a large folio—hence its name—and the title of the first edition ran as follows :—

"The Byble in Englyshe, that is to saye the content of all the holy scripture, bothe of ye olde and newe testament truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by ye dylygent studye of dyuerse excellent learned men expert in the forsayde tonges."

Surrounding this title was an elaborate and curious design, said to have been the work of Holbein. At the top of the page Christ is depicted in the clouds of heaven. His arms are outstretched, and two scrolls proceed out of His mouth. On one appears the inscription in Latin: "The word which goeth forth from Me shall not return to Me empty, but shall accomplish whatsoever I will have done." The other is addressed to Henry who is represented as kneel-

ing bare-headed, and runs : "I have found Me a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will." To this Henry makes answer : "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet." The King, now seated on his throne, is himself the central figure in the next part of the page. He is engaged in handing "the Word of God" to Cranmer and other clergy on his right hand, and to Cromwell<sup>1</sup> and other lay-peers on his left. To the former his address is : "These things command and teach"; to the latter : "Judge righteously; ye shall hear the small as well as the great." While a third scroll bears the words : "I make a decree that in all my Empire and Kingdom men should tremble and fear before the living God. Dan. vi." Below this again Cranmer and Cromwell are distributing the Bible, and at the bottom of the page a preacher harangues a crowd from a pulpit in the open air, beginning : "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, thanksgivings be made for all men, for Kings." At the mention of kings all shout in Latin, the children who know no Latin in English, "God save the King."

From an historical point of view, it will be seen, this page is most interesting. It represents in the clearest manner what was believed to be Henry's attitude to the new undertaking ; while the contents of the top compartment, and the Latin imprint at the end of the volume, "This is the Lord's doing," alike testify to the truly devout and grateful spirit of its promoters. The other preliminary matter calls for no special remark ; but it may be noted that, like Matthew's Bible, the Great Bible is divided into five parts, and that the fourth part, containing the Apocrypha, is strangely described as "The Bookes of Hagiographa," a name usually applied to a wholly different set of books, those namely in the Old Testament which are not comprehended under "the Law" or "the Prophets," such as Job, the Psalms, etc.

<sup>1</sup> After Cromwell's fall, the shield at his feet on which his coat of arms had been emblazoned was left blank ; but the figure remained untouched.

**§ 3. Translation and Text.**—The translation of the Great Bible was based on Matthew's Bible of 1537; but the whole was subjected by Coverdale to a careful revision, with the aid principally of Münster's Hebrew-Latin version in the Old Testament, and of the Vulgate and Erasmus in the New. Thus it is to Münster's influence that we owe such changes in Psa. xxiii. as "paths of righteousness" for "way of righteousness"; "through the valley of the shadow" for "in the valley of the shadow"; and "I will dwell in the house" for "that I may dwell in the house"; all of which have kept their place in the Authorised Version. In the New Testament the authority of Erasmus has clearly made itself felt in "born from above" for "born anew" in John iii. 3, and, unfortunately, in "one fold" for "one flock" in John x. 16, as the following short extract will show. The original spelling is preserved, and the differences from Tindale (1534) indicated by italics.

#### JOHN x. 14-16 (GREAT BIBLE, 1539)

I am *the* good shepheerid and knowe *my shepe*, and am knownen of myne. As my father knoweth me, euen so know I *also* my father. And I geue my lyfe for the shepe: and other shepe I haue, which are not of this fold. Them also must I bring, *and* they shall heare my voyce, and ther shall be one *folde* and one shepheherde.

If, however, the translation of the Great Bible presents few important variations, its text exhibits one very characteristic feature. In preparing the work Coverdale had carefully noted such diversities of readings as he came across, and many of them, particularly from the Vulgate, he afterwards incorporated in the text, distinguishing them, however, from the original by parentheses and difference of type. The following are examples:—

Josh. ii. 11, "As we heard these things (we were sore afraid and) our hearts did faint."

Job xiv. 6, "He may rest (a little) until his day come."

Isaiah xl. 1, "Comfort my people (O ye prophets)."

Luke xvii. 36 ("Two in the field, the one shall be received, and the other forsaken").

Luke xxiv. 36, "Peace be unto you (It is I, fear not)."

Gal. v. 13, "But by love (of the Spirit) serve one another."

Col. iii. 25, "Neither is there any respect of persons (with God)."

Coverdale had also intended to insert "certain godly annotations" at the end to explain "the dark places of the text"; but for want of sufficient leisure the Bible had to be published without them, and they were never afterwards added.

**§ 4. The Psalter.**—Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the version of the Psalms which appears in the English Prayer-Book is different from that in our ordinary Bibles, and the explanation, according to a note in the former, is that its Psalter follows "the Translation of the great English Bible, set forth and used in the time of King Henry the Eighth, and Edward the Sixth." As a matter of fact, when in 1662 the rest of the Scriptural passages in the Prayer-Book were altered according to the A.V. it was found impossible to make any change in the Psalter. The familiarity that had grown up round a part of the Bible so much in use had doubtless much to do with this, and in addition it was urged that its language was "more smooth and fit for song."

As to the melodiousness and rhythmical beauty of the Great Bible Psalter, there cannot indeed be two opinions, as any one by means of the Prayer-Book may easily verify for himself.<sup>1</sup> Beside its smoothly-flowing sentences so high an authority as Dr. Scrivener pronounces our

<sup>1</sup> It will be kept in view, however, that a number of slight variations from the Great Bible have crept into the Prayer-Book version.

present version “prosaic” and “spiritless”; while in its “incomparable tenderness and sweetness” Bishop Westcott claims to find the translator’s own gentle spirit reflected, “full of humility and love . . . and therefore best in harmony with the tenor of our own daily lives.”

Apart, however, from its devotional use, the inferiority of Coverdale’s version as a translation must at once be conceded. For not only are its renderings often inaccurate, but there is frequently a redundancy about them which deprives them of much of their force. The following examples of the two versions may be submitted for comparison in this respect.

## THE GREAT BIBLE, 1539

Psa. xlvi. 5, “Good luck have thou with thine honour, ride on because of the word of truth, of meekness and righteousness.”

Psa. lxviii. 6, “He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in a house.”

Psa. cxxvii. 3, “It is but lost labour that ye rise up early, and take no rest, but eat the bread of carefulness: for look to whom it pleaseth Him, He giveth it in sleep.”

## THE A.V. 1611

“And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness.”

“God setteth the solitary in families.”

“*It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: *for* so He giveth His beloved sleep.”

The additions to the text, to which reference has already been made, are specially numerous in the Psalms, and some of them are very interesting. Thus in Psa. xiv. three whole new verses are introduced after what is ver. 3 in our A.V., with the view apparently of bringing it into harmony with the quotation in Rom. iii. 10-18, which St. Paul has evidently brought together from different sources. In Psa. xxix. after the opening words there is inserted the clause, “Bring young rams unto the Lord”; and in Psa. cxxxii. 4 we have the additional particular, “neither the temples of my head to take any rest.”

**§ 5. New Editions.**—On 14th November 1539 Cromwell received from the King a patent conferring on him the sole power of licensing the printing and publication of English Bibles for the next five years; and on the same day, by a strange coincidence, he had a letter from Cranmer asking whether the royal approval had been obtained for a Preface which he, the Archbishop, had written for a new edition of the Great Bible. Early in the following year this new edition, which from the Preface is often called **Cranmer's Bible**,<sup>1</sup> was published, and to it the story told by Fulke is in all probability to be referred. The Bible had been committed by the King to "divers bishops of that time to peruse," and on their being asked what was their judgment of the translation, they answered that there were many faults therein. "Well," said the King, "but are there any heresies maintained thereby?" They replied that there were none that they could find. "If there be no heresies," said the King, "then, in God's name, let it go abroad among our people."

Cranmer's Preface is a vigorous piece of writing, in which the Archbishop speaks of "the largeness and utility of the Scripture, how it containeth fruitful instruction and erudition for every man," and how in consequence "it is convenient and good for the Scriptures to be read of all sorts and kinds of people, and in the vulgar tongue." Only, he continues, let men see to it how they read. "Every man that cometh to the reading of This Holy Book ought to bring with him first and foremost this fear of Almighty God; and then, next, a firm and stable purpose to reform his own self according thereunto; and so to continue, proceed, and prosper, from time to time; showing himself to be a sober and fruitful hearer and learner."

As regards text, Cranmer's edition was a revision of the Great Bible of 1539, as it had been of Matthew's Bible of 1537; but it is unnecessary here to define further the changes introduced either in it, or in the five sub-

<sup>1</sup> The 1539 edition is also sometimes called Cranmer's Bible, but with it the Archbishop had nothing special to do.

sequent editions which followed rapidly within the next eighteen months.<sup>1</sup> It is more important for our present purpose to notice what an impetus must have been given to Bible study by the appearance of these seven splendid folios, commended as they were by the King's direct sanction, and vigorously supported by the most influential men in the land.

**§ 6. Reception in England.**—The statement just made admits of easy proof. No sooner had the first edition of the Great Bible been issued in 1539 than Cromwell, as the King's vicegerent, issued certain injunctions to the clergy requiring them to provide without delay "one boke of the whole Bible of the largest volume in Englyshe," to be set up in the churches, the cost to be divided between themselves and their parishioners; and enjoining them to "expresslye provoke, stere [stir], and exhort every parson [person] to rede the same, as that whyche ys the verye lively worde of God." Whatever the clergy may have thought,<sup>2</sup> the opportunity thus afforded was gladly taken advantage of by the people, and it must have been a pleasing sight in the aisle of some country church to see the little group gathered round the Great Bible, from which some one more educated than the rest read aloud. Even Bonner, who under Queen Mary was to gain such unenviable notoriety as a persecutor, actually set up six Bibles for the common good in Old St. Paul's.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Strange to say, one of these bears to be "ouersene" by no less a person than Tindale's untiring foe Cuthbert Tunstal, now Bishop of Durham.

<sup>2</sup> With reference to this or a similar proclamation in the previous year, Strype tells us: "The parsons, vicars, and curates did read confusedly the Word of God and the King's injunction, lately set forth, and commanded by them to be read: humming and hawking thereat, that almost no man could understand the meaning of the injunction." But they could not keep the people in ignorance. "Every one that could," says the same writer, "bought the book, or busily read it; or got others to read it to them if they could not themselves; and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the holy Scriptures read." See *Historical Account* prefixed to Bagster's *Hexapla*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> The reading of one of these Bibles by John Porter, "a fresh

**§ 7. Instances of Intolerance.**—We must not, however, imagine that this open reading of the Bible was everywhere viewed with favour. Thus, as an instance of domestic intolerance, Strype relates an affecting story of one William Malden, of Chelmsford, a lad of fifteen, who was accustomed to join a few poor men in the reading of the New Testament “at the lower end of the church” on Sundays. His father, a zealous Romanist, fetched him away again and again, but the boy, undaunted and determined to become acquainted with the Word of God, procured a Testament for himself and to “conceal it, laid it under the bed-straw, and read it at convenient times.” One night in a conversation with his mother he declared that kneeling before the crucifix was a breach of the commandment, “Thou shalt not make any graven image, nor bow down to it, nor worship it,” which, coming to the ears of his father, he dragged his son from the bed, and whipped him unmercifully. “And when the young man bore this beating, as he related, with a kind of joy, considering it was for Christ’s sake, and shed not a tear, his father, seeing that was more enraged, and ran down and fetched a halter, and put it about his neck, saying he would hang him.”

Many more interesting particulars of the time might be given, but we have space only to mention one or two in connection with our own Scottish history. They will be found at length in Dr. Eadie’s valuable work, *The English Bible*. Thus he tells us that the enmity of the popish ecclesiastics in the north against the English Scriptures was very strong, and that Cardinal Beaton had a list of intended victims, to the number of more than a hundred of the nobility and gentry, because, in the words of the English ambassador, they were “gentlemen all well-minded to God’s Word.” The King could not stand even the sight of the list; but through the influence of Beaton five persons were burned on the

young man, and of a big stature, who could read well, and had an audible voice,” furnished Sir George Harvey with the subject of a well-known picture.

Castle Hill of Edinburgh on the 1st March 1539, for apparently no other crime than that they “did not hesitate to study the books both of the Old and New Testament.” At the trial of one of them, Dean Thomas Forrest, Vicar of Dollar, it was brought forward against him—as apparently a dangerous innovation!—that he preached out of the Scripture, and committed every day three chapters to memory; and further, that he taught his parishioners to say the Paternoster, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments in English, “which is contrary to our Acts, that they should know what they say.” When in vindication Forrest quoted the declaration of the Apostle that “he would rather speak five words with the understanding, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue,” he was challenged by his interrogators, “Where foundest thou that?” “In my book here, in my sleeve,” was his reply. Immediately it was plucked out, and his accuser exclaimed: “Behold, sirs, he has the book of heresy in his sleeve that has made all the din and play in our Kirk.” It was at this trial that the Bishop of Dunkeld merrily exclaimed: “I thank God that I never knew what the Old or New Testament was.”

This deplorable state of matters was not, however, long allowed to continue. On the 12th of March 1543 it was proposed in the Parliament meeting at Edinburgh, that “all the lieges in this realm may read the Scriptures in our native tongue.” All efforts at opposition or compromise were in vain—though the Dean of Restalrig “long repugned,” and certain “old bosses along with him”—and proclamation was made at the Market Cross of Edinburgh, that every man was free to read “the Scriptures in his own or the English tongue.” That the nation as a whole gladly availed itself of this liberty is clear from John Knox’s words, twenty-five years later, describing the effects of the Act: “This was no small victory of Christ Jesus, fighting against the conjured enemies of His verity: not small comfort to such as before were holden in such bondage that they durst not

have read the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, nor Articles of their faith in the English tongue, but they should have been accused of heresy. There might have been seen the Bible lying almost upon every gentleman's table. The New Testament was borne about in many men's hands."

## CHAPTER X

## THE GENEVAN VERSIONS

1. Events from 1541-1557.
2. Whittingham's Testament of 1557.
3. The Genevan Bible of 1560.
4. Marginal Notes.
5. Popularity of the Genevan Bible.
6. The Bassandyne Bible.

§ 1. **Events from 1541-1557.**—For some years after the publication of the Great Bible there was a time of suspense in the external history of our English Bible. No new versions appeared, a proposed revision by the Bishops falling through, owing to Gardiner's pressing the retention of so many Latin words in the text that it would have been practically unintelligible. Nor, which is far more serious, were the older versions left undisturbed. In 1543 Parliament passed an Act for the "Advancement of True Religion," in which all books of Tindale's translation were "clearly and utterly abolished and extinguished, and forbidden to be kept or used"; and no one belonging to the class of apprentices, servants, husbandmen, or labourers was permitted to read the Old or New Testament at all either in public or in private. The reason for such an absurd enactment it is difficult now to understand, but it doubtless arose out of Henry's complaint that the book was "disputed, rhymed, sung, and jangled in every alehouse and tavern, contrary to the true meaning and doctrine of the same." Three years later the proscription was extended in still more rigorous terms to the writings of Wycliffe, Coverdale, and many others, so that practically only the Great Bible was left. And such was the

state of the times that even its use must have been attended with a certain amount of danger.

By Henry's death on 28th January 1547, and the accession of Edward VI. to the throne, all this was changed. According to a well-known story, the English Bible was then for the first time used at a royal coronation, for when three swords were brought, signs of his being king of three kingdoms, Edward said there was yet one wanting. "And when the nobles about him asked what that was, he answered, *The Bible*. 'That book,' added he, 'is the Sword of the Spirit, and to be preferred before these swords.' . . . And when the pious young King had said this, and some other like words, he commanded the Bible with the greatest reverence to be brought and carried before him." One of Edward's first acts, moreover, was to issue an order requiring that all beneficed persons "shall provide within three months next after this visitation, one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English"; and that, so far from discouraging its use, they "shall rather conform and exhort every person to read the same, as the very lively word of God, and the special food of man's soul." That these enactments proved no dead letter is evidenced by the fact that during Edward's short reign at least thirteen editions of the Bible and thirty-five editions of the New Testament were printed. The same reign saw also the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer, which, with slight alterations, is still used in the Church of England, and of the Forty-two, afterwards reduced to Thirty-nine, Articles of Religion, which form that Church's doctrinal standard.

Amidst such signs of religious zeal, we may be sure that the work of Bible-translation was not lost sight of; but still no new version appeared. A revision contemplated by Cranmer came to nothing, because the two scholars whom he had secured for the purpose "fell sick, which gave a very unhappy stop to their studies"; while a translation of the New Testament by Sir John Cheke did not get farther than the middle of the first chapter of

St. Mark.<sup>1</sup> It is not even certain that his version was ever intended for publication ; but in any case the death of Edward VI. and the accession of "Bloody" Mary gave a new turn to the ever-varying fortunes of our Bible's history. Cranmer soon followed Rogers to the stake, and the public, though apparently not the private, use of the Scriptures was strictly forbidden. Foreseeing what was coming, a number of leading Reformers had already contrived to escape to the Continent ; and of these a small band eventually settled at Geneva, attracted doubtless by the fame of Calvin. There, as they themselves tell us, "we thought we could bestow our labours and study in nothing which could be more acceptable to God, and comfortable to His Church, than in the translating of the Scriptures into our native tongue."

§ 2. **Whittingham's Testament of 1557.**—We shall see the result of their combined labours directly, but in the meantime we have to notice that in 1557 there appeared a translation of the New Testament alone, apparently the unaided work of one of their number, William Whittingham.<sup>2</sup> In his Address to the Reader, Whittingham describes his work as specially intended for the "simple lambs which partly are already in the fold of Christ, and partly wandering, through ignorance." And it was doubtless the thought of the same readers that led to the numerous annotations, in which he claims to have left "nothing unexpounded, whereby he that is anything exercised in the Scriptures of God might justly complain of hardness."<sup>3</sup> The text, according to the title-page, had been "conferred diligently with the Greek, and

<sup>1</sup> The most interesting feature of this fragment is the translator's evident desire to introduce home-born terms. Thus with him parable is *biword*; regeneration, *gainbirth*; and crucified, *crossed*. To the same striving after simplicity we owe such quaint renderings as "Happy be the beggars in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Matt. v. 3); and "They have winked hard with their own eyes, lest they should see with their eyes" (xiii. 15).

<sup>2</sup> Whittingham was married to Calvin's sister-in-law, not sister as is often stated, and in 1559 succeeded Knox in the pastorate of the English congregation. He contributed several Psalms to the Sternhold and Hopkins' Collection.

<sup>3</sup> An Epistle by John Calvin declaring that "Christ is the end of

best approved translations," and was for the first time in an English translation divided into verses. In previous translations no other sub-division had ever been attempted than into paragraphs of various lengths, but Whittingham now "for the profit of the reader" adopted the shorter sections prepared by R. Stephens for one of his editions of the Greek Testament.<sup>1</sup> These verse-divisions were afterwards applied to the whole Bible in 1560, from which they have passed into our own Authorised Version. They can however only be defended on the ground of convenience of reference, for their whole tendency is to destroy the connection, and so to obscure the sense of the original.

Another innovation which Whittingham introduced, and which has also come down to us, was the use of different type to indicate words that had no place in the original, but which were added to make the meaning clear; for example: Luke vi. 40, "The disciple is not above his master: but whosoever *will be* a perfect *disciple* shall be as his master is"; 2 Cor. v. 13, "For whether we be fools, *we are fools* to God; or whether we be in our right mind, *we are* in our right mind for your *commodity*."

Of the translation itself, it is not necessary to say more just now than that it is founded not so much on the Great Bible as on Tindale. A few verses from the Epistle to the Philippians will make this clear, as well as illustrate the general character of the translation.

### PHIL. ii. 5-11 (WHITTINGHAM, 1557)

5. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

the law" was also prefixed to the Testament, and doubtless further helped its popularity.

<sup>1</sup> Stephens worked out his scheme hurriedly on a journey from Paris to Lyons in 1551. "I think," says an old commentator, "it had been better done on his knees in the closet" (quoted by Smyth, *How we got our Bible*, p. 67, note). In the Old Testament the division into verses was already in existence in the Hebrew Bible.

6. Who being in the shape of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

7. But He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the shape of a servant, and was made like unto men, and was found in appearance as a man.

8. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross.

9. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name above all names.

10. That at the Name of Jesus should every knee bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under earth.

11. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* the Lord, unto the praise of God the Father.

In these verses, Whittingham agrees with the Great Bible as against Tindale (1534) in only one place, but with Tindale as against the Great Bible in no fewer than seven places. He differs from both moreover in other seven places, of which the most important are: "was made" for "became," "in appearance" for "in his apparell," "at the Name of Jesus" for "in the Name of Jesus," and "every tongue" for "all tongues." With one exception ("in appearance") these changes have all found their way into the A. V., and it is curious to think that by the erroneous substitution of "at the Name" for "in the Name of Jesus should every knee bow," this version has actually been the means of establishing one of those outward ceremonies against which the Genevan Reformers so strongly set themselves.<sup>1</sup>

§ 3. **The Genevan Bible of 1560.**—Three years after the appearance of Whittingham's Testament, a new translation of the whole Bible was issued at Geneva, which in one important particular differed from all preceding versions. It was the work of no single scholar, but of a small body of men banded together for the pur-

<sup>1</sup> The custom of bowing in English churches when the name of Jesus is mentioned is traced to this verse.

pose, amongst whom we may specially mention William Whittingham, Thomas Sampson, and Anthony Gilby. Others of the exiles, such as the veteran translator Miles Coverdale, and John Knox, may have taken part in the work for a time, but they did not remain at Geneva to see its completion. The translators had also the benefit of the advice of Calvin and Beza.

The title of this Bible, which in more ways than one was to exercise a marked influence on our own A.V., ran as follows :—

“The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated according to the Ebrue and Greke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages. With moste profitable annotations vpon all the hard places, and other thinges of great importance, as may appeare in the Epistle to the Reader.”

In size, the volume was a moderate quarto, unlike the huge folio editions of the Great Bible, and the cost of its production was met by members of the congregation at Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

In their introductory epistle, as we have already seen in similar instances, the translators give us a clear glimpse into their spirit and aims. After speaking of previous translations as requiring greatly “to be perused and reformed,” they go on to speak of the advantages that they enjoy for this task “by reason of so many godly and learned men, and such diversities of translations in divers tongues.” “And this,” they continue, “we may with good conscience protest, that we have in every point and word, according to the measure of that knowledge which it pleased Almighty God to give us, faithfully rendered the text, and in all hard places most sincerely expounded the same. For God is our witness, that we have by all means endeavoured to set forth the

<sup>1</sup> Amongst these was John Bodley, father of the founder of the famous Bodleian Library at Oxford, who afterwards received from Elizabeth the exclusive right of printing the new version in England for seven years.

purity of the word and right sense of the Holy Ghost, for the edifying of the brethren in faith and charity."

That the Genevan translators are entitled to make this claim, scholars who have critically examined their work are fully agreed. Every page proves that no efforts were spared to follow as correct a text as possible, and that the best available aids were freely consulted. Thus to confine ourselves to the New Testament, which started naturally from Whittingham's Testament as a basis, the student will do well to compare the following verses with the earlier version given above. The differences between the two versions are again indicated by italics.

PHIL. ii. 5-11 (GENEVAN, 1560)

5. Let the same mind be in you that was *even* in Christ Jesus.

6. Who being in the *form* of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God :

- 7. But He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the *form* of a servant, and was made like unto men, and was found in *shape* as a man.

8. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the Cross.

9. Wherefore God hath *also* highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above *every* name.

10. That at the Name of Jesus should every knee bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.

11. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, unto the *glory* of God the Father.

The changes here may not at first appear of great importance ; but their very minuteness is in itself a striking proof of the care bestowed upon the work, and of the way in which step by step our English version has been perfected.

Indeed, the accuracy of both versions is very remarkable, and, if space permitted, many examples might be brought forward of passages in which they showed

themselves the first of all the English translators to seize the exact meaning of the original ; as Matt. xxviii. 14, where Whittingham's Testament renders rightly, "And if this come *before the Governor*, we will pacify him," with reference to a judicial hearing, and not merely, as in Tindale and the Great Bible, "*to the ruler's ears*," which might be the result of chance hearsay ; or again, Jas. i. 13, where both versions correctly translate "God cannot be tempted with evil," instead of "God tempteth not unto evil" (Wycliffe and Tindale). In this same chapter the Genevan have caught the full sense of the figure, which is missed by all English versions except the R.V. of 1881, "with whom is no variable-ness, neither *shadowing by turning*" (ver. 17).

Apart too from the exact scholarship which these renderings display, we owe to the Genevan translators many happy terms of expression, as the following selection from Dr. Edgar's table of comparison will prove.<sup>1</sup>

#### GREAT BIBLE, 1540

Deut. xxxii. 7, "Remember the days of the world that is past, consider the years from time to time."

Eccles. xii. 1, "Remember thy Maker the sooner in thy youth, or ever the days of adversity come."

Isa. xi. 3, "He shall not give sentence after the thing that shall be brought before his eyes."

Isa. xxxii. 2, "The shadow of a great rock in a dry land."

Other renderings are interesting rather for their quaintness, as when in Gen. iii. 7 we read, "They sewed fig-tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches"—the translation which has given the Genevan Bible the common name of the **Breeches Bible**.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bibles of England*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> The rendering, however, is not peculiar to the Genevan, but is

#### GENEVAN BIBLE, 1560

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of so many generations."

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, whiles the evil days come not."

"He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes."

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

**§ 4. Marginal Notes.**—The same scholarship and care which distinguish the text reappear in the marginal notes with which it is provided. Some of them, indeed, as might be expected in the circumstances, display a strongly Calvinistic bias, and others are bitterly anti-papal; but the great majority are simply explanatory or hortatory. The following are specimens:—

Exod. i. 19, “Their disobedience herein was lawful, but their dissembling evil.”

Psa. lxxxix. 12, “Tabor is a mountain westward from Jerusalem, and Hermon eastward: so the prophet signifieth that all parts and places of the world shall obey God’s power for the deliverance of His Church.”

Rom. vi. 5, “The Greek word meaneth, that we grow up together with Christ, as we see moss, ivy, mistletoe, or such like grow up by a tree, and are nourished with the juice thereof.”

Rom. ix. 15, “As the only will and purpose of God is the chief cause of election and reprobation: so His free mercy in Christ is an inferior cause of salvation, and the hardening of the heart an inferior cause of damnation.”

Rev. ix. 3, “Locusts are false teachers, heretics, and worldly subtil prelates, with monks, friars, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, doctors, bachelors, and masters, which forsake Christ, to maintain false doctrine.”

**§ 5. Popularity of the Genevan Bible.**—These notes, as well as the convenient form in which it was issued, tended as much as anything else to the warm welcome which was at once given to the new version on its arrival in England. Though never sanctioned for public use, it quickly established its place as the *household* copy of the Scriptures amongst Bible students,

found both in Caxton’s *Golden Legend* and in Wycliffe. Common also to Wycliffe and the Genevan is the word “cretche” or cradle for “manger” in Luke ii. 7

passing in all through more than 130 editions, several of which appeared even after the publication of the A.V. in 1611.<sup>1</sup>

The Genevan was, indeed, peculiarly the Puritan's Bible, one interesting proof of which need alone be mentioned. It has for long been a tradition that each of the soldiers in the Commonwealth army was provided with a pocket-bible, and there have been various conjectures as to which edition was used. Recent investigations have however established that this Bible consisted simply of appropriate quotations from the Scriptures, printed in pocket form, and that these quotations were taken from the Genevan Version. The first two will show their character.<sup>2</sup>

#### A SOULDIER MUST NOT DOE WICKEDLY

Deut. 23. 9, "When thou goest out with the host against thine enemies, keepe thee then from all wickednesse."

Luke 3. 14, "The souldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, and what shall we do? And he said unto them, doe violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."

**§ 6. The Bassandyne Bible.**—The Genevan Bible was the first edition of the Bible printed in Scotland. This was in 1579—the New Testament alone had already appeared in 1576—and it is usually described as the *Bassandyne Bible*, from the printer's name, Thomas Bassandyne. He, however, died before the publication, and his name in consequence does not appear on the completed work. The cost of this Bible, as fixed by the General Assembly, was £4 : 13 : 4 pennies Scottis; and

<sup>1</sup> In 1649 an edition of the A.V. itself was actually brought out with the Genevan notes, evidently for the purpose of commending it to public favour. When the notes were finally withdrawn, the people, according to Fuller, complained that "they could not see into the sense of the Scriptures for lack of the spectacles of the Genevan annotations."

<sup>2</sup> From a facsimile reprint of *Cromwell's Soldier's Bible* just published by Mr. Elliot Stock.

by an Act of Parliament every householder possessed of a certain sum was bound to have a copy.

Nor was this a mere idle letter ; for in June 1580 one John Williamson was commissioned to visit and search every house in the realm, “and to require the sicht of their Bible and Psalm-buke, gif they ony have, to be marked with their awn name, for eschewing of fraudulent dealing in that behalf.” And about the same time the Magistrates of Edinburgh issued a proclamation on their own behalf, commanding all citizens to have Bibles in terms of the Act of Parliament, and announcing that copies are to be “sauld in the merchant buith of Andrew Williamson, on the north side of this burgh, besyde the Meill Mercat.”<sup>1</sup>

We can only further notice that the text of the Genevan version, unlike the text of most previous versions, was never subjected to a complete revision ; though in 1576 one Laurence Tomson brought out an amended edition of the New Testament in which the influence of Beza is so marked, that it may be taken as explaining the misleading statement on the title-page, “translated out of Greek by Theodore Beza.” After 1587, Tomson’s Testament generally took the place of the earlier version in fresh issues of the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For these and many other interesting particulars see *History of the Bassandyne Bible*, by William T. Dobson, Edinburgh, 1887. What is believed to be a perfect copy of the Bassandyne Bible was acquired a few years ago for the Edinburgh Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> The order of books in the Genevan Bible is the same as that in our modern Bibles, except that the Prayer of Manasseh from the Apocrypha was inserted after Second Chronicles. The name of St. Paul is omitted from the title of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in a prefatory argument the authorship is left an open question : “For seeing the Spirit of God is the author thereof, it diminisheth nothing the authority although we know not with what pen He wrote it.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BISHOPS' BIBLE

1. Origin of the Bishops' Bible.
2. Archbishop Parker and the Bishops.
3. Description of the Bishops' Bible.
4. Character of the translation.
5. Marginal notes.
6. General estimate.

**§ I. Origin of the Bishops' Bible.**—Amongst the symbolic greetings with which Queen Elizabeth was welcomed as she passed through the streets of London on the occasion of her accession was one which has an interesting bearing on the subject before us. At the “Little Conduit in Cheape” an old man appeared with scythe and wings, representing Father *Time*, leading his daughter *Truth*. In her hand Truth held a copy of the Bible in English, bearing the inscription *Verbum Veritatis*, the Word of Truth, and this she delivered to the Queen. “But she, as soon as she had received the book, kissed it,” and after thanking the city for the present, said “she would often read over that book”—“to the great comfort,” it is added afterwards, “of the lookers-on.”

To the attitude here taken up Elizabeth remained on the whole consistent. For if she did not always display that religious zeal which the more ardent Reformers hoped for, she at least consulted the feelings of her Protestant subjects in leaving the circulation of the Scriptures open and uncontrolled. In 1559 she pleased English Churchmen by enacting, as Edward VI. had done, that “one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English” should be set up in every parish;

while in the following year she accepted the dedication of the Bible of the Genevan exiles.

The two versions, the Great Bible and the Genevan Bible, were thus brought into a kind of conflict which was in any case inevitable. It would have been unreasonable to expect that the successors of Cromwell and Cranmer could look with favour on a Bible emanating from the school of Calvin, and containing so many "prejudicial notes." On the other hand the growing popularity of the Genevan version amongst the people, and its admitted excellences of translation, made it impossible for the Great Bible any longer to hold its place unchallenged. The need of an "authorised" version began thus to make itself very widely felt, and about the year 1563-64, Matthew Parker, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, set himself to try to supply the want. The result was the Bible which, from the number of Bishops engaged in its production, is generally known as the **Bishops' Bible**.

**§ 2. Archbishop Parker and the Bishops.**—Parker's scheme was as follows. Sorting out "the whole Bible into parcels" he distributed these amongst qualified scholars "to peruse and collate," adding certain general instructions for their guidance in the work. Of these instructions the most important were, that the revisers were "to follow the common English translation used in the churches, and not to recede from it, but where it varieth manifestly from the Hebrew or Greek original"; and further "to make no bitter notes upon any text, or yet to set down any determination in places of controversy." We shall see directly how these instructions were carried out; but in the meantime, to show the character of the men engaged in the work, we may gather a few sentences from their letters addressed to Parker.<sup>1</sup> Thus Bishop Parkhurst of Norwich pledges

<sup>1</sup> The initials of a number of the translators appear at the end of their several "parcels," a course which the Archbishop thought politic "to make them more diligent and answerable for their doings." But these initials do not always agree with a list contained

himself "to travel therein with such diligence and expedition as he might"; Bishop Sandys thinks "your Grace shall do well to make the whole Bible to be diligently surveyed by some well learned before it be put to print"; and Bishop Cox expresses the hope that "such usual words as we English people be acquainted with might still remain in their form and sound, so far forth as the Hebrew will well bear. Ink-horn terms to be avoided." In view of so sensible a suggestion it is astonishing to find the same prelate proposing that the verbs in the Psalms should be translated "uniformly in one tense"—a method of securing uniformity only less objectionable than that of Bishop Guest of Rochester. The Psalter had been assigned to him, and writing to apologise for his "rude handling" of it, he goes on to say: "Where in the New Testament one piece of a Psalm is reported, I translate it in the Psalms according to the translation thereof in the New Testament, for the avoiding of the offence that may rise to the people upon divers translations." "The principle of pious frauds," remarks Dr. Plumptre, "of distorting the truth for the sake of edification, has perhaps often been acted on by other translators. It has not often been so explicitly avowed."<sup>1</sup>

On 5th October 1568 a copy of the completed translation was ready for presentation to the Queen, and in a letter to Cecil accompanying it Parker expressed the hope that his "honour would obtain of the Queen's Highness that this edition might be licensed, and only commended in public reading in churches, to draw to one uniformity."<sup>2</sup> But from whatever cause, this license was apparently never granted. Cranmer's Bible continued to bear upon it the mandate "according to the translation

in a letter addressed by Parker to Cecil, and it is no longer possible to apportion the different books exactly.

<sup>1</sup> Article "Version, Authorised," in *Smith's Bib. Dict.* vol. iii. p. 1674.

<sup>2</sup> Parker's passion for uniformity gave rise to Fuller's pun, "A Parker indeed, careful to keep the fences." The Archbishop did not like men that were not, to use his own epithet, "disciplinable."

appointed to be read in churches"; and not till 1573 was an edition of Parker's announced as "Set foorth by auctoritie," and this, too, by *episcopal*, not *royal* authority. The support of Convocation indeed had never been wanting to the new version. According to the "Constitutions and Canons" of 1571 it was enacted that "every archbishop and bishop should have at his house a copy of the Holy Bible of the largest volume, as lately printed in London . . . and that it should be placed in the hall or large dining-room, that it might be useful to their servants or to strangers"—an order that was further extended to each cathedral, and as far as possible to all churches.<sup>1</sup>

**§ 3. Description of the Bishops' Bible.**—The original edition of the Bishops' Bible was a splendid folio set forth with every attraction of paper and printing,<sup>2</sup> and furnished with a number of woodcuts, a description of the Holy Land, and a chart of St. Paul's journeys. The title was striking in its simplicity. It was merely—

### The Holie Bible

and the only other words on the page were a quotation in Latin from Rom. i.: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth." There was no special dedication; but in the centre of the title-page was an engraving of Elizabeth, and portraits of the Earl of Leicester and of Cecil were introduced at the beginning of Joshua and the Psalms. In addition to other prefatory matter Cranmer's Prologue was reprinted from the Great Bible, and two new Prefaces were provided by Parker himself for the Old and New Testaments respectively. In the first of these the Archbishop dwelt on the need of the present revision, while emphasising what his instructions

<sup>1</sup> By the same canon, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was ordered to be set up in the same places—a wonderful testimony to the high esteem in which it was held.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Cecil, the Primate draws attention to the fact that "the printer hath bestowed his thickest paper on the New Testament, because it shall be most occupied."

to his fellow-workers had already made clear—that it was intended “not as condemning the former translation [the Great Bible], which was followed mostly of any other translation except the original text.” He aptly cited St. Augustine to the effect that “divers translations many times have made the harder and darker sentences the more open and plain”; and Fisher, once Bishop of Rochester, was also quoted as affirming that “many things have been more diligently discussed, and more clearly understood by the wits of these latter days as well concerning the Gospels as other scriptures, than in old times they were . . . who can doubt, but that such things as remain yet unknown in the Gospel, shall be hereafter made open to the later wits of our posterity, to their clear understanding?”

The books of Scripture were classified as “some legal, some historical, some sapiential, some prophetical,” which in the New Testament at any rate led to strange results; for why should the Synoptic Gospels be “legal” and St. John and the Acts “historical”? In accordance also with one of Parker’s instructions in an edition in 1574 “places not edifying” were marked, “so that the reader may eschew them in his public reading.”

At the end of the Bible was, “A Table to fynde the Epistles and Gospels read in the Church of England”; and the printer was stated to be “Richard Jugge, printer to the Queenes Maiestie.” His mark, a pelican feeding her young with her blood, illustrative of the love of Christ for His people, adorned the last page.

**§ 4. Character of the Translation.**—The basis of the work throughout was the Great Bible, and Archbishop Parker had further laid down, it will be remembered, that this was to be altered as little as possible. As might be expected, however, from the number of scholars employed, this instruction was very variously understood, and in some sections the changes introduced are far more numerous than in others.

Thus to confine ourselves in the first instance to the Old Testament, the Historical books as a rule follow the Great

Bible very closely ; but in the Prophetical books there is greater variation, many of the changes being distinctly traceable to the influence of the Genevan Bible. The striking thing however is, not that so many improved Genevan renderings have been adopted, as that so many have been neglected. And yet after all, in the circumstances, this was only natural. The Bishops could hardly be expected to show on every page their indebtedness to the very version they were seeking to supplant. But at the same time it is obvious that this unwillingness to avail themselves of the undoubted scholarship of the Genevan exiles seriously marred their own version, and failed to secure for it a permanent place. To illustrate this we may print a short extract from the two versions in parallel columns, which may further be compared with Coverdale's version as given above on pp. 53-4.

## ISAIAH liii. 1-5.

## GENEVAN BIBLE, 1560

1. Who will believe our report : and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?

2. But he shall grow up before him as a branch, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath neither form nor beauty : when we shall see him, there shall be no form that we should desire him.

3. He is despised and rejected of men : he is a man full of sorrows, and hath experience of infirmities, we hid as it were our faces from him : he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4. Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows : yet we did judge him as plagued, and smitten of God, and humbled.

## BISHOPS' BIBLE, 1568

But who hath given credence unto our preaching ; or to whom is the arm of the Lord known ?

For he did grow before the Lord like as a branch, and as a root in a dry ground : he hath neither beauty nor favour ; when we look upon him there shall be no fairness ; we shall have no lust unto him.

He is despised and abhorred of men : he is such a man as hath good experience of sorrows and infirmities : we have reckoned him so vile, that we hid our faces from him.

Howbeit he only hath taken on him our infirmity, and borne our pains : yet we did judge him as though he were plagued, and cast down of God.

5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was broken for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

Whereas he [notwithstanding] was wounded for our offences, and smitten for our wickedness : for the pain of our punishment was laid upon him, and with his stripes are we healed.

Beyond the general light that is cast on the character of their version by the above comparison, the Bishops' renderings in this passage do not call for any special remark. Only three of them appear to be in any sense original, that is, not directly traceable to the influence of some earlier version—the omission of the last clause in ver. 3, the translation of “infirmity” in the singular in ver. 4, and the omission of the last two words in the same verse—and of these “corrections” not one has met with acceptance. This is indeed the general fate of the Bishops’ original emendations in the Old Testament. “They stand neglected,” says Dr. Edgar, “on the disused pages of the Bishops’ version, and on the pages of that version only.” At the same time it is only fair to add that we owe to the Bishops such happy expressions as “He that hath a *bountiful* eye shall be blessed” (Prov. xxii. 9); “Rend your heart, and not your *garments*” (Joel ii. 13); and “Now we call the proud *happy*” (Mal. iii. 15).

When we turn to the New Testament these evidences of a fine literary instinct are still more numerous, while many passages bear traces of a careful and independent study of the Greek original. Thus in one short passage (Eph. iv. 7-16) Bishop Westcott finds twenty-six variations from the Great Bible, of which no less than sixteen are new, and of these again four have found their way into our own A.V. To understand rightly, however, the relation of the Bishops’ version to the A.V. we must study it not in the 1568 edition, but in a revised edition which was issued four years later, and which in the New Testament especially contained many marked improvements. In the following extracts we shall therefore quote from it. The italics show the places in which

the Bishops have introduced changes from the Great Bible of 1539. The comparison with the A.V. the reader can make for himself.

JOHN x. 14-16 (BISHOPS' BIBLE, 1572)

14. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15. As *the* Father knoweth me, even so know I also *the* Father ; and I give my life for the sheep.

16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also *I must* bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold [and] one shepherd.

HEB. xiii. 5-8 (BISHOPS' BIBLE, 1572)

5. Let your conversation be without covetousness *being* content with such things as ye have (*add* already, Great Bible). For he hath said I will *in no case* fail thee, neither forsake thee.

6. So that we may boldly say The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man may do unto me.

7. Remember them which have the oversight of you, which have spoken unto you the word of God, *whose end of conversation ye considering, follow their faith.*

8. Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same (*add* continueth Great Bible) for ever.

The Bishops' rendering of ver. 7 in the last extract may serve to illustrate the only other point in their translation to which we can draw attention, namely, its occasional cumbrousness and love of "mouth-filling" phrases. Thus their translation of Psalm xxiii. begins : "God is my shepherd, therefore I can lack nothing : He will cause me to repose myself in pasture full of grass, and He will lead me unto calm waters" ; and in 2 Cor. ix. 5, the Corinthians are exhorted to "prepare your

fore-promised beneficence, that it might be ready as a beneficence and not as an extortion.”<sup>1</sup>

**§ 5. Marginal Notes.**—The marginal notes in the Bishops’ Bible are not so numerous as in the Genevan, and are very unevenly distributed through the different books. The majority are occupied with points of interpretation, but a few are doctrinal. The following examples will illustrate both classes:—

Gen. ii. 19, “Man shewed himself lord of all beasts, by giving them names.”

Deut. vii. 12, “This covenant is grounded upon His free grace, therefore in recompensing their obedience He hath respect to His mercy, and not to their merits.”

Psa. lxviii. 4 (“*His name Everlasting*”), “Jah, a name of God that signifieth Him to be always and other things to be of Him.”

Luke iv. 29 (“*Top of the hill*”), “The Greek readeth brow of the hill.”

Phil. ii. 12, “Our health hangeth not on our works, and yet are they said to work out their health who do run in the race of justice. For although we be saved freely in Christ by faith, yet must we walk by the way of justice unto our health.”

Of these notes the second, like many others throughout the Bible, is taken directly from the Genevan version. With the last it may be interesting to compare the Genevan annotation on the same passage: “Run forward in that race of righteousness wherein God hath freely placed you through Jesus Christ, and conducteth you by his Spirit to walk in good works, and so to make your vocation sure.”

**§ 6. General Estimate.**—Of the Bishops’ Bible about thirty editions in all were published, the last appearing in 1606; but along with the Genevan Bible,

<sup>1</sup> Closely allied to this is the Bishops’ habit of introducing brief explanatory clauses within brackets, and in a different type, as John xviii. 13 (“*And Annas sent Christ bound unto Caiaphas the High Priest*”); Eph. ii. 5, “By (whose) grace ye are saved.”

it continued in use for some time afterwards.<sup>1</sup> It owed its position however rather to external authority than to any independent merits as a translation, although we can hardly go to the length of a recent writer in describing it as "the most unsatisfactory and useless of all the old translations."<sup>2</sup> We may rather adopt the weighty and guarded words of Dr. Moulton—he is speaking of the 1572 New Testament: "The verdict of the student will vary according to the portion which he is examining. Again and again he will wonder at the retention of an early rendering which had been corrected by a later translator, or the preference shown for a roundabout phrase . . . but he will meet with many proofs of close study of the original text, and an earnest desire to represent it with all fairness to the English reader."

<sup>1</sup> So late as 1621 Bishop Andrews, though himself one of the revisers to whom we owe the A.V. of 1611, took his texts from the Bishops' Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Lovett, *The Printed English Bible*, p. 120.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE RHEIMS AND DOUAI BIBLE

1. The Rheims New Testament.
2. Character of the translation.
3. Marginal Notes.
4. Influence on the Authorised Version.
5. The Douai Old Testament.

As we have already seen, the Church of Rome had never looked with favour on the translation of the Bible into English, and different edicts had from time to time been issued to try and prevent its circulation. In spite, however, of such prohibitions the spread of the Holy Scriptures in England amongst all classes of the population had gone steadily on, and with it, in the eyes of Rome, an alarming increase in heresy. It was resolved therefore to try a change of policy, and, if the Bible must be read, at least to provide the faithful with a version free from the "partial and false translations," by which, according to Romish Churchmen, all existing versions were disfigured. Curiously enough this version, like the immediately preceding Protestant version of Geneva, was produced in exile.

At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign a number of English Catholics had taken refuge at Douai in Flanders, and there established a college for the purpose of training agents to win back England to Roman Catholicism. To three of these refugees the credit of the new version principally belongs, namely, William Allen, Gregory Martin, and Richard Bristow. Allen, who was afterwards created a cardinal, and who, if the Armada had succeeded, was to have been Primate of England, may be looked upon as the moving spirit of the whole

work ; Martin, "an excellent linguist, exactly read and versed in the Holy Scriptures," as the principal translator ; and Bristow as one of the main contributors of the notes which were a distinguishing feature of the version.

**§ I. The Rheims New Testament.**—The first part of the new translation to appear was the New Testament, which was published in 1582 at Rheims, whither for a time, owing to a Huguenot riot, the college had been removed.<sup>1</sup> It bore a somewhat formidable title :—

"The New Testament of Iesus Christ, translated faithfully into English out of the authentical Latin, according to the best corrected copies of the same, diligently conferred with the Greeke and other editions in diuers languages : with Arguments of bookees and chapters, Annotations, and other necessarie helpees, for the better vnderstanding of the text, and specially for the discouerie of the Corrvptions of diuers late translations, and for clearing the Controversies in religion, of these daies. In the English College of Rhemes."

Then came this verse from Psa. cxviii. in Latin and English: "Giue me vnderstanding, and I wil searche thy law, and wil keepe it with my whole hart"; followed by a quotation from St. Augustine also in both languages: "Al things that are readde in holy Scriptures, we must heare with great attention, to our instruction and saluation : but those things specially must be commended to memorie, which make most against Heretikes : whose deceites cease not to circumuent and beguile al the weaker sort and the more negligent persons."

The foregoing sentence from St. Augustine indicates very clearly the spirit in which the whole work was undertaken, and which is still further defined in the elaborate Preface to the Reader. After guarding against the idea "that the holy Scriptures should

<sup>1</sup> It was restored at Douai in 1593, and finally located in England in the parish of Standon in Hertfordshire.

always be in our mother tongue," and affirming that they have only undertaken their present work "upon special consideration of the present time, state, and condition of our country," the translators extol the wisdom of the Church in neither forbidding utterly nor authoritatively commanding the use of any Catholic translation. They admit that the decree of the Council of Trent according to which the Scriptures "may not be indifferently read of all men," cannot any longer be "so precisely observed, as in other times and places"; but at the same time they indignantly deny that our forefathers suffered every one "that had a little Greek or Latin, straight to take in hand the holy Testament; or that the translated Bibles into the vulgar tongues, were in the hands of every husbandman, artificer, prentice, boys, girls, mistress, maid, man. . . . No, in those better times men were neither so ill, nor so curious of themselves, so to abuse the blessed book of Christ: neither was there any such easy means before printing was invented, to disperse the copies into the hands of every man, as now there is." "We therefore," they continue, "having compassion to see our beloved countrymen, with extreme danger of their souls, to use only such profane translations . . . have set forth, for you (benign readers) the New Testament to begin withal, trusting that it may give occasion to you, after diligent perusing thereof, to lay away at least such their impure versions as hitherto you have been forced to occupy."

How far they have succeeded in this, the Rhemists modestly add, it is not for them to judge; but, to guard against error in every way, they claim to have at least been "very precise and religious" in following their copy, "the old vulgar approved Latin: not only in sense, which we hope we always do, but sometimes in the very words also and phrases, which may seem to the vulgar reader and to common English ears not yet acquainted therewith rudeness or ignorance; but to the discreet Reader that deeply weigheth and considereth the importance of sacred words and phrases . . . reasonable and necessary."

A few examples are then given of their method of translation, and attention is drawn to the marginal notes in which they sometimes give the Greek rendering “when the sense is hard.” Finally they conclude: “Thus we have endeavoured by all means to satisfy the indifferent reader, and to help his understanding every way. . . . Fare well, good Reader, and if we profit thee any whit by our poor pains, let us for God’s sake be partakers of thy devout prayers, and together with humble and contrite heart call upon our Saviour Christ to cease these troubles and storms of His dearest spouse.”

**§ 2. Character of the Translation.**—From the above abstract of the Editors’ Preface it will be seen that the Rheims Testament was, like the Wycliffite versions, only a *secondary* translation, not made, that is, from the original Greek, but from the Vulgate, or Latin translation of it. We may expect therefore to find both the excellences and the failings of this old version reproduced—the more so because of the closeness, “word for word, and point for point,” with which it was followed.

A passage which we have already cited several times will illustrate this as well as any other, besides lending itself for comparison with earlier versions.

PHIL. ii. 5-11 (RHEIMS, 1582)

5. For this think in yourselves, which also in Christ Jesus,

6. Who when He was in the form of God, thought it no robbery, Himself to be equal to God;

7. But he exinanited Himself, taking the form of a servant, made into the similitude of men, and in shape found as man.

8. He humbled Himself, made obedient unto death: even the death of the cross.

9. For the which thing God also hath exalted Him, and hath given HIm a name which is above all names:

10. That in the name of Jesus every knee bow of the celestials, terrestrials, and infernals:

11. And every tongue confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

The result, it must be confessed, if on the whole very accurate, is from its extreme literalness somewhat stilted and pedantic, while the same cause leads to actual ambiguity in the first and last verses. Many more glaring instances of this last fault might easily be cited. Thus to mention only one or two, referred to by the translators themselves : in John ii. 4 we find our Lord's question rendered, "What is to me and thee, woman ?"; in Eph. vi. 12 the last clause runs, "The spirituals of wickedness in the celestials"; and in 1 Pet. ii. 2 the exhortation takes the form, "As infants even now born, reasonable, milk without guile desire ye"—a rendering for which the defence is offered : "We do so place 'reasonable,' of purpose, that it may be indifferent both to infants going before, as in our Latin text : or to milk that followeth after, as in other Latin copies and in the Greke."

Closely connected with this literalness is the number of Latin terms which the Rheimsists employ, so that their translation, as Fuller puts it, in turn "needs to be translated." Thus in the passage given above we have such a word as "exinanited," which had been used in no previous version, and has fortunately failed to keep a place in any subsequent one. Similarly we have such renderings as, "Give us to-day our supersubstantial bread" (Matt. vi. 11); "He was assumed" (Acts i. 2); "Purge the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are azymes. For our Pasche, Christ, is immolated" (1 Cor. v. 7); "Keep the good *depositum*" (2 Tim. i. 14).<sup>1</sup>

More interesting however than these Latinised terms, many of which have disappeared from the revised

<sup>1</sup> A table containing fifty-eight terms "not familiar to the vulgar reader" is given at the end of the book ; but many of these, such as "victim," "gratis," "allegory," are now in general use. It would be interesting to know how far the Rheims Testament was responsible for naturalising them.

editions of the Rheims Testament itself, are the renderings in which the translators allow their theological opinions to appear. Thus John the Baptist's message runs, "Do penance : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2); and Christ's beatitude is, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice : for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6), the rendering "justice" being deliberately chosen, here and elsewhere throughout the New Testament, instead of "righteousness," because it was imagined that by the latter the Protestants meant to suppress justification by works. So too in Luke xxii. 20 we read of the "chalice" instead of the "cup," to favour the view, so their Protestant critic Dr. Fulke asserted, "that Christ used not a common cup, usual to be drunken in at meat, but a consecrated vessel such as is occupied at masse"; while in Titus iii. 5 "the laver of regeneration" takes the place of the Genevan "the washing of the new birth." Other Rhemish renderings have a close relation to Scottish ecclesiastical nomenclature, as Luke iii. 14, "Be content with your stipends"; or Gal. vi. 6, "And let him that is catechized in the word, communicate to him that catechizeth him, in all his goods."

**§ 3. Marginal Notes.**—The theological bias, which shows itself here and there in the translation, is most unmistakably present in the marginal notes and annotations, which, like the famous Genevan notes, although from a directly opposite standpoint, are largely of a doctrinal and polemical character. The following are examples:—

Matt. vi. 24, "*Two Masters.* Two religions, God and Baal, Christ and Calvin, Masse and Communion, the Catholic Church and Heretical Conventicles. Let them mark this lesson of our Saviour, that think they may serve all masters, all times, all religions. Again the two masters do signify, God and the world, the flesh and the spirit, justice and sin."

Acts iii. 1, "This maketh for distinction of

canonical hours, and diversity of appointed times to pray."

Acts viii. 31, "The Scriptures are so written that they cannot be understood without an interpreter, as easy as our Protestants make them."

2 Pet. ii. 19, "Who ever promised more liberty to their followers than Luther, Calvin, and the like, taking away penance, fasting, continency or chastity, keeping of vows, necessity of good works (because faith doth all), obedience to ecclesiastical pastors and councils, and such like?"

Occasionally, however, there are notes of a more critical character, which prove that the translators, while translating from the Latin, must have kept the Greek text before them as they worked. Thus on their rendering of Acts xiii. 2, "As they were ministering," they remark : "If we should, as our adversaries do, boldly turn what texts we list, and flee from one language to another for the advantage of our cause, we might have translated for *ministering, sacrificing*, for so the Greek doth signify, and so Erasmus translated. . . . But we keep our text, as the translators of the Scriptures should do most religiously."

The careful observance of the definite article in many places where previous translators had neglected it points in the same direction. For as the Latin has no definite article, this can only have come from an independent study of the Greek. Examples are "the pinnacle" (Matt. iv. 5); "the meat . . . the raiment" (Matt. vi. 25); "the lamp" (John v. 35); "the rest" (Eph. ii. 3); and "the white robes" (Rev. vii. 13)—improvements, it may further be noted, in which even the translators of our own A.V. failed to follow the Rheimsists, though they had their version before them.

**§ 4. Influence on the Authorised Version.**—Of this last statement there is abundant proof. Though the Rheims New Testament was not, as we shall see directly, amongst the translations recommended to King James's

revisers, it was clearly made use of. From it, for example, such Latin words have been introduced into our version as "hymn" (Matt. xxvi. 30); "decease" (Luke ix. 31); "separated" (Rom. i. 1); "impenitent" (Rom. ii. 5); and "contemptible" (2 Cor. x. 10). Or to confine ourselves to a single Epistle. In the short First Epistle of John the following familiar phrases are all traceable directly to the influence of the Rhemish version: "Confess our sins" (i. 9) where previous versions had "knowledge" or "acknowledge"; "He is the propitiation" (ii. 2) instead of "He it is that obtaineth grace"; "the unction" (ii. 20) instead of "ointment"; and "we may have confidence" (ii. 28) instead of "we may be bold."

Other examples of this dependence might be given were it necessary; but enough has been said to show that the Rheims New Testament is entitled to a place, even if it be not a very prominent one, in the line of ancestry of our English Bible. With an appeal that was made to it and rejected under very tragic circumstances, we may take farewell of it.

On the evening before her execution, Mary Queen of Scots, laying her hand on a copy of the Rhemish New Testament, which happened to be on her work-table, took a solemn oath of innocence. The Earl of Kent at once interposed that the book was false, and that consequently the oath was of no value. "Does your Lordship suppose," replied the Queen, "that my oath would be better, if I swore on your translation in which I do not believe?"

**§ 5. The Douai Old Testament.**—There is reason to believe that the translation of the Old Testament had been finished even before that of the New Testament; but its publication was delayed until 1609-10 "for lack of good meanes," or, as the translators add, "our poore estate in banishment." The title of the completed work, which was in two volumes, began:—

"The Holie Bible Faithfully Translated into English out of The Avthentical Latin. Diligently con-

ferred with the Hebrew, Greeke, and other Editions  
in diuers languages."

On the title-page of vol. i. was the verse from Isa. xii. "You shall draw waters in joy out of the Sauiours fountaines"; and on the last page the brief note, "We have already found some faults escaped in printing, but fearing there be more, and the whole volume being over long to be examined again, we pray the courteous reader to pardon all and amend them as they occur." On the title-page of vol. ii. was the verse from 2 Pet. i. "The holie men of God spake, inspired with the Holy Ghost."

There is again an address "To the right well beloved English reader," in which the merits of the Latin text are freely extolled. It is preferred, indeed, even to the Hebrew original, which has been "foully corrupted," so it is alleged, by the Jews. In other particulars the address presents no special features, and the same may be said of the translation generally. We find again the same straining after an extreme literalness that met us in the New Testament, and the same constant introduction of Latinised terms. This, for example, is how our Psalm xxiii. was rendered.

#### PSALM xxiii. (DOUAI, 1609-1610)

Our Lord ruleth me, and nothing shall be wanting to me: in place of pasture there He hath placed me. Upon the water of refection He hath brought me up: He hath converted my soul. He hath conducted me upon the paths of justice, for His name. For, although I shall walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not fear evils: because Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff: they have comforted me. Thou hast prepared in my sight a table, against them that trouble me. Thou hast fatted my head with oil: and my chalice inebriating how goodly is it! And Thy mercy shall follow me all the days of my

life : and that I may dwell in the house of our Lord,  
in longitude of days.

How little adapted such a version is to the purposes of devotion is self-evident ; while the general faultiness of the translation of the Douai Psalter cannot be wondered at when we keep in view that it is a translation from a corrupt Latin text, which in its turn was an indifferent translation from the Greek, and not from the original Hebrew.

On the Douai Old Testament, however, we need not further dwell. As it was not published till 1610, it can have had little or no influence on our **Authorised Version**, which appeared in the following year. To the history of that version we must now turn.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE AUTHORISED VERSION—HISTORY OF THE UNDERTAKING

1. Origin of the Authorised Version.
2. Work of translation.
3. Title and Contents.
4. The Preface.
5. Marginal Notes—References—Headings—Italics.
6. In what sense authorised.

AT the close of the sixteenth century, leaving out of sight the older translations, we are met with three Protestant versions of the Bible in more or less general use. There was the **Great Bible** of Henry VIII., still to be seen chained to the desk in many country churches ; there was the **Genevan Bible**, the favourite Bible of the people ; and there was the **Bishops' Bible**, supported by ecclesiastical authority. Such a state of things could not well continue, and we might naturally have expected a general movement on the part of the clergy or the people towards securing greater uniformity. So far however as we can learn no such movement took place, and it was left to a casual utterance at a Conference summoned for a different purpose to start the idea of the version which was gradually to supersede all its rivals, and for two hundred and fifty years hold its place unchallenged as the Bible of all English-speaking peoples.

§ 1. **Origin of the Authorised Version.**—King James I., on succeeding to the throne of England in 1603, found himself face to face with two great parties in the Church. There was the High Church or Ritualistic party, and there was the party of the Puritans, who were continually complaining of certain grievances to which

they said they were subjected. In the great "Millenary Petition" presented to the King on his way to London, and signed by several hundreds of clergy, "groaning under a common burden of human rites and ceremonies," these grievances found distinct voice. Accordingly one of James' first acts was to summon a Conference which met at Hampton Court Palace on the 14th, 16th, and 18th of January 1604, to hear and determine "things pretended to be amiss in the Church."

On most points the Puritans can hardly have been satisfied with the result of the Conference ; but in one, for us, vitally important particular the King acceded to their wishes. During the second day's proceedings, in the course apparently of some general conversation on a portion of the Apocryphal Books, Dr. Reynolds, the Puritan leader, threw out the suggestion "that there might be a new translation of the Bible because those which were allowed in the reign of King Henry VIII. and Edward VI. were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original." The instances of mistranslation which he cited in support of this allegation were neither numerous nor important ; and we can hardly wonder at the grumble of the Bishop of London, that "if every man's humour should be followed, there would be no end of translating." But the King was of a different mind. He had always delighted in theological disputations, and had even at one time commenced a new translation of the Psalms himself. Reynolds' proposal therefore quite fell in with his views, and he expressed the wish that "some especial pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation ; professing that he could never yet see a Bible well translated in English, but the worst of all his Majesty thought the Geneva to be." James further proposed that the new translation should be undertaken by "the best learned in both the universities, after them to be reviewed by the bishops and the chief learned of the Church ; from them to be presented to the Privy Council ; and lastly to be ratified by his royal authority ; and so this whole Church to be bound unto it and none other."

On the suggestion of the Bishop of London he gave this caveat "that no marginal notes should be added," having found, so he said, in a Genevan Bible given him by an English lady, "some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits." In evidence he pointed to the notes on Exod. i. 19, which "alloweth disobedience unto the King"; and on 2 Chron. xv. 16, which "taxeth Asa for deposing his mother only; and not killing her."

X It is impossible to believe that James' acquaintance with the Genevan version was so recent as this account pretends. On the contrary, it was the Bible in the use of which, in Scotland, he had been brought up, and on portions of which he had actually published certain expositions. At the same time his dislike to its notes seems to have been genuine, and probably tended as much as anything else to his persevering in the new undertaking. For a few months later we find him writing to Bancroft, then representing the See of Canterbury, announcing that he had appointed (probably at the suggestion of the Universities) "certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty, for the translating of the Bible," and requiring him to provide for their recompense by church preferment. The immediate expenses of the undertaking Bancroft was also commissioned to see to, for though His Majesty, so it was said, was very ready "of his most princely disposition" to have borne these, "some of my lords, as things now go, did hold it inconvenient."

The new version, accordingly, though it bears his name, cost the King himself nothing. And, as a matter of fact, the only money recompense that any of the translators received was the sum of thirty shillings a week which the Company of Stationers<sup>1</sup> paid to each of the scholars engaged in the final revision.

**§ 2. Work of Translation.**—The Hampton Court Conference had met in the beginning of 1604, but three years seem to have elapsed before the work was formally

<sup>1</sup> According to another account the money was paid by Barker, the printer.

entered upon, and then, from whatever cause, we hear only of forty-seven instead of fifty-four translators. A full list of their names and the special portions assigned to each company will be found in any of the larger Bible histories. Here it is enough to notice that amongst the translators were many men justly famed for their scholarship, such as Launcelot Andrews, of whom it was said that he might have been "interpreter-general at Babel"; Edward Lively, reputed "one of the best linguists in the world"; Miles Smith, the author of the Preface, who "had Hebrew at his finger-ends"; and Andrew Downs, described as "one composed of Greek and industry."

Fourteen rules had been drawn up for the translators' guidance, to the most important of which we shall have occasion to refer in connection with the different points with which they deal; but of the general history of the undertaking almost nothing is known. "Never," says Dr. Scrivener, who is our principal authority on all that concerns this version, "was a great enterprise like the production of our Authorized Version carried out with less knowledge handed down to posterity of the labourers, their method and order of working."<sup>1</sup> In accordance, however, with the instructions laid down, the translators were divided into six companies, two meeting at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford respectively, and after each company had gone over its own portion, the result went the round of the other companies "to be considered of seriously and judiciously." The whole was then finally revised by a select committee of six, or, according to another account, twelve, who met in London for the purpose. To this last revision an often-quoted anecdote is probably to be referred. "The translation in King James' time took an excellent way. That part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue (as the Apocrypha to Andrew Downs), and then they met together, and one read the Translation, the rest

<sup>1</sup> *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, p. 9.

holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned Tongues, or French, Spanish, Italian, etc. ; if they found any fault they spoke, if not he read on." According to the translators' own account the whole work was carried through in two years and three-quarters—no very long time for so important an undertaking.

**§ 3. Title and Contents.**—The full title of the new Bible ran as follows :—

"The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament and the New: Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues: with the former Translations diligently compared and reuised by his Maiesties Speciall Comandement. Appointed to be read in Churches. Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majestie. Anno Dom. 1611."

After the title-page came the fulsome Dedication to King James, which still appears in all our modern editions, followed by "The Translators to the Reader," a noble Preface of considerable length, which unfortunately is almost universally omitted. Then we have a Kalendar; Almanack for xxxix yeares, etc.; Table of Proper Lessons, etc.; and "The Names and Order of all the Books." In many copies there was inserted a map of Canaan, and also a copy of "Genealogies of Holy Scripture," by one John Speed, to whom the King had sold the right of inserting his work in the Authorised Version. At the bottom of the last page was the single word FINIS.

**§ 4. The Preface.**—The Translators' Preface is a singularly interesting document, generally understood to be chiefly the work of Dr. Miles Smith. To do it justice it must be studied in its entirety, but the following brief abstract may give an idea of its character.<sup>1</sup>

After some introductory remarks on the calumnies that follow all reformers and revisers, the translators pass to a beautiful eulogy in praise of the Holy Scriptures. "But now," they ask, "what piety without

<sup>1</sup> It has been reprinted (price One Penny) by the S.P.C.K.

truth? What truth, what saving truth, without the word of God? What word of God, whereof we may be sure, without the Scripture? The Scriptures we are commanded to search. . . . If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. . . . And what marvel? the original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the penmen, such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit."

"But how," they continue, "shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue? . . . Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that pulleth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place." A long account of previous translations follows, and the labours of English workers in this field are held to be deserving of "everlasting remembrance." "Yet for all that," they say, "as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the latter thoughts are thought to be the wiser: so, if we building upon their foundation that went before us, and being holpen by their labours, do endeavour to make that better which they left so good; no man, we are sure, hath cause to mislike us; they, we persuade ourselves, if they were alive, would thank us." Certain cavils of their adversaries are then met, and after again alluding to their own purpose in translating, the translators conclude: "It remaineth that we commend thee (gentle Reader) to God, and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think. He removeth the scales from our eyes, the vail from our hearts, opening our wits that we may understand His word, enlarging our hearts, yea, correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea, that we

may love it to the end. . . . The Lord work a care and conscience in us to know Him and serve Him, that we may be acknowledged of Him at the appearing of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the Holy Ghost be all praise and thanksgiving. Amen."

Other statements from the Preface will meet us again in speaking of the character of the translation : in the meantime we may notice one or two general features of the version.

**§ 5. Marginal Notes—References—Headings—Italics.**—It will be remembered that when the question of a new version was first mooted the King forbade all such annotations as had appeared in the Genevan Bible ; and to the same effect the sixth instruction to the translators enjoined, "No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words which cannot, without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text." The first part of this rule was closely followed, and all notes of a theological or controversial character were rigidly excluded ; but at the same time the permission extended in its latter part was liberally interpreted and taken advantage of. In the original edition of our Authorised Version, excluding the Apocrypha, over seven thousand brief **Marginal Notes** are to be found,<sup>1</sup> of which fully two-thirds in the Old Testament give the more literal meaning of the Hebrew or Chaldee, while in the New Testament about the same proportion suggest alternative translations of the Greek. It has been said that the marginal renderings of the Authorised Version are as a rule more to be trusted than those in the text ; but with this verdict no scholar now will probably be found to agree. At the same time the excellence of many of them is shown by their having been transferred by the recent revisers from the margin to the text.<sup>2</sup> Others of the notes are helpful for the information

<sup>1</sup> Many more notes, such as the historical ones at the end of Dan. ix., have been interpolated in subsequent editions, and ought to be distinguished by brackets or in some other way.

<sup>2</sup> Examples which can be readily verified will be found at Gen.

they convey regarding distances, weights, and measures. But the usefulness of the notes as a whole is much marred by their being so mixed up with the host of marginal references, as in consequence to be frequently lost sight of by the reader.<sup>1</sup>

These **References** are computed not to have exceeded nine thousand in 1611, though in some modern editions they have risen to the enormous total of sixty thousand. They are all, at least in the original edition with which alone we are at present concerned, intended to facilitate the study of the Bible by comparing one passage with another, and as a rule they fulfil that purpose admirably. Occasionally however the reference is obscure, if not actually misleading, as when John iv. 24, "God *is* a Spirit ; and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth," is paralleled with 2 Cor. iii. 17, "Now the Lord *is* that Spirit : and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty."

**Headings** of chapters and columns had existed both in the Genevan and in the Great and Bishops' Bibles ; but the translators of the Authorised Version introduced an entirely new set, which with only twelve exceptions have kept their place in most of the Bibles now in use. Thus for the pithy heading to Jer. x. 21 in the Bishops' Bible, "Of evil Curates," we have now "He lamenteth the spoil of the tabernacle by foolish pastors" ; while the quaint column-heading of the Genevan at Mark vi., "Inconvenience of dancing," has given place to "John the Baptist beheaded."

One other point which may be fittingly noticed here is the use of **Italics** in the Authorised Version to mark words not directly represented in the original. In this the translators of 1611 were simply following the example already set them in previous versions, more

xxi. 33 ; xxxi. 19 ; Lev. xvi. 8 ; Psa. xxiv. 6 ; Ezek. xxix. 10 ; Matt. ii. 11 ; iv. 12 ; v. 21 ; Mk. i. 4 ; vi. 27 ; vii. 3 ; John x. 24 ; 1 Cor. vii. 15 ; xi. 2 ; Eph. iii. 10 ; Heb. iii. 16 ; vii. 28 ; Rev. xiii. 1.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Annotated Paragraph Bible*, published by the Religious Tract Society, the notes are printed separately at the foot of the page.

particularly in the Genevan, and the practice has been warmly commended as serving to mark distinctly that the work is a translation. But against this it may be urged that if the words italicised do no more than represent the sense of the original, there is no reason for specially distinguishing them : while, if they go beyond that, they are of the nature of a gloss or explanation, and have no right to be there at all. In any case if italics are to be admitted it is much to be regretted that greater care was not taken in 1611 to secure uniformity of practice in their use. In no particular have corrections in subsequent editions been more required. One example must suffice. In 1 Pet. iv. 11, "*let him speak*" is italicised in 1611 ; but the clause immediately following, which stands on exactly the same footing, "*let him do it*," not until 1629.

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§ 6. **In what sense authorised.**—There remains still the question, In what sense can we speak of this new version as the **Authorised Version**? The name has been sometimes traced to the words on the title-page, "Appointed to be read in Churches," as if its use was at once formally enjoined by the King, as soon as it was published. But, whatever the words may mean, "no evidence has yet been produced to show that the version was ever publicly sanctioned by Convocation or by Parliament, or by the Privy Council, or by the King." The Bishops' Bible, so long as the old copies lasted, continued to be used in the churches : the Genevan was for still a generation the favourite in the home. Only slowly, and by the force of superior merit, did King James' version attain the position which it now enjoys. It became the "authorised" version simply because it was the best.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE AUTHORISED VERSION—CHARACTER OF THE TEXT

1. The Authorised Version a revision rather than a translation.
2. Dependence on earlier versions.
3. General excellence and reception of the Authorised Version.

FROM the foregoing general account of the Authorised Version we must turn to the character of the text, and notice briefly one or two points that bring out its peculiar excellences.

**§ 1. The Authorised Version a Revision rather than a Translation.**—From the inscription on the title-page, “Newly translated out of the Originall Tongues,” we might be led to think that the Authorised Version was an altogether independent translation; but the words must be understood as directly qualified by what follows, “with the former Translations diligently compared and reuised.” Our received version was in fact, like its immediate predecessors, a revision rather than a translation. The King himself showed that he contemplated nothing else when in his opening instruction he laid down: “The ordinary Bible, read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops’ Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the Original will permit.” While the men engaged in the work bear testimony to the same effect: “Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one

principal good one, not justly to be excepted against ; that hath been our endeavour, that our mark."

So far, therefore, from being dissociated from previous versions, the Authorised Version only represents a fresh stage in the process of polishing and correcting which our English version of the Scriptures had been undergoing from the days of Tindale. Based upon the Bishops' Bible, it reached back through that to the Great Bible of 1539, and thence to Matthew's Bible of 1537 ; this in its turn was derived from the Coverdale Bible of 1535, in the composition of which Tindale's versions played so large a part. In other words, the Authorised Version is a revision five times revised.

In this work of revision King James' translators naturally depended in the first instance upon a careful comparison of the Bishops' renderings with the original Hebrew and Greek. "These," in their own words, "are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, wherethrough the olive branches empty themselves into the gold. . . . If truth be to be tried by these tongues, then whence should a translation be made, but out of them?" In consequence we find in the Authorised Version many exact and literal renderings now introduced for the first time, as when in Isa. liii. 12 the Hebrew verb in the first clause is translated "divide" instead of as in the Bishops' Bible "give" ; or in Heb. iv. 1 the participial clause gets its true meaning "a promise being left us," not "forsaking the promise," as in the earlier versions. Apart too from the correction of actual errors the translators show their clear grasp of the original by many graphic turns of expression, as in this same Epistle to the Hebrews—"Captain of their salvation" (ii. 10) ; "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest" (iv. 11) ; and "The sin which doth so easily beset us" (xii. 1).

**§ 2. Dependence on earlier Versions.**—On the whole, however, to return to the relation of the Authorised Version to earlier English versions, its points of agreement with them, considered collectively,

are more noticeable than its divergences. Wherever King James' translators found what seemed to them a specially happy rendering they appropriated it, so that their work became a kind of mosaic of the best results of previous versions. In doing this they were again only carrying out the King's wishes, for his fourteenth instruction especially provided : "These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible : Tindale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's [the Great Bible, so named from one of its printers], Geneva." And one of the most interesting exercises of the study in which we have been engaged is to take a passage of the Authorised Version, and to trace back its words and phrases to their different sources. The short extracts scattered through our pages will provide the reader with a certain amount of material for doing this ; but it may be well again to draw pointed attention to two versions, which, though not occupying places in the direct line of descent of the Authorised Version, were largely made use of by its translators. These were the Genevan and Rhemish versions.

It may appear strange that the Genevan Bible should have exercised any influence on the new version when we remember that the King had already condemned it as the worst of all translations ; but the fact is beyond dispute. Thus, for example, Dr. Westcott has pointed out that of the variations from the Bishops' Bible in Isa. liii. "about seven-eighths are due to the Genevan version," either alone or in agreement with one of the Latin versions. And though he warns us that this is an extreme instance, he adds that it "only represents on an exaggerated scale the general relation in which the Authorised Version stands to the Genevan and Bishops' Bibles in the Prophetic books." In the Historical books of the Old Testament the influence of the Genevan is less marked ; but in the New Testament it supplies us with many familiar phrases, such as—

Luke ix. 33, "It is good for us to be here" ("It is good being here for us," Tindale and subsequent versions).

Acts xiv. 15, "Men of like passions with you" ("Mortal men like unto you," Tindale, etc.)

1 Cor. xiii. 12, "We see through a glass darkly" ("We see in a glass even in a dark speaking," Tindale, etc.)

2 Cor. v. 20, "Ambassadors for Christ" ("Messengers in the room of Christ," Tindale, etc.)

Heb. iv. 13, "The eyes of him with whom we have to do" ("The eyes of him of whom we speak," Tindale, etc.)

In the same way, although at the opposite pole doctrinally and ecclesiastically from the Genevan, and not mentioned at all in the King's instructions, the Rheims New Testament has left its mark in many unsuspected ways on our English Bible. Examples have already been given, but a few more may be of interest. It will be understood that the second rendering within brackets represents the general rendering in versions other than the Rhemish.

Matt. xxvi. 26, "Jesus took bread and *blessed* it" ("gave thanks").

John ix. 22, "He should be *put out* of the synagogue" ("excommunicate").

Acts xiv. 23, "When they had *ordained* them elders" ("ordained by election").

2 Cor. v. 18, "Hath given to us *the ministry of reconciliation*" ("the office to preach the atonement").

Heb. xii. 16, "*Profane* person as Esau" ("unclean").

We cannot carry this comparison farther, but on the whole question of the pedigree of the Authorised Version we may sum up in the concise words of Dr. Eadie: "The Authorized Version has in it the traces of its origin, and its genealogy may be reckoned. For while

it has the fulness of the Bishops' without its frequent literalisms or its repeated supplements, it has the graceful vigour of the Genevan, the quiet grandeur of the Great Bible, the clearness of Tyndale, the harmonies of Coverdale, and the stately theological vocabulary of the Rheims. It has thus a complex unity in its structure —all the earlier versions ranging over eighty years having bequeathed to it contributions the individuality of which has not been in all cases toned down."

**§ 3. General Excellence and Reception of the Authorised Version.**—While, however, the work of King James' translators was thus mainly one of revision, we must not fail to accord to them the full praise to which they are entitled for the care which they exercised. "Neither did we disdain," they tell us, "to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered . . . fearing no reproach for slowness, nor praise for expedition." Their method, too, of working in companies prevented their version from showing those marks of individuality by which certain previous translations had been disfigured; while their combined responsibility for the whole, and not merely for their own several parts, gave a general smoothness and consistency to the work, in which the Bishops' Bible, for example, was sadly lacking. To other points connected with the Authorised Version, such as the appropriateness of its vocabulary, the beauty of its style, its subsequent influence upon our language and literature, and the part it has played in forming the national character, it is impossible to refer at length here; but it is necessary to emphasise what has been more than once alluded to, that the new version, notwithstanding all its excellences, did not at once meet with general acceptance. On the contrary it had to work its way slowly and gradually in the face of much bitter criticism. One eminent scholar went the length of saying that he "had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation, by my consent, should be urged on poor churches." Other

charges, such as those of an undue ecclesiastical or doctrinal bias on the part of the translators in certain of their renderings, though now in the main disproved, could not fail to have considerable weight at the time. The translators themselves had expected nothing else. "Was there ever anything projected," they ask, "that savoured any way of newness or renewing, but the same endured many a storm of gainsaying or opposition?"

As regards Scotland it is strange, and not altogether to our credit, that the country of Knox and Melville never produced a translation of the Bible of its own. Copies of the Wycliffite versions and of Tindale's Testaments had found their way into the Northern Kingdom, and in 1579, as we have already seen, the Genevan Bible was reprinted in Edinburgh; but no indigenous version was apparently ever thought of, and in the beginning of the seventeenth century, notwithstanding national and other antipathies, Scotland had still to look to England for her Bible. According to the "Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiasticall" of 1636 it was enacted that there should be provided for every Parish "a Bible of the largest volume," and further, that "the Bible shall be of the translation of King James." And though two years later these canons were rejected, the way was at least paved for the general circulation of the Authorised Version.<sup>1</sup>

If, however, the new version was thus slow in establishing itself, the hold which, once acquired, it has since maintained is unparalleled in the history of any other English translation. None have been more ready to admit this than the men who in 1870 were appointed to revise it. "We," so the New Testament revisers tell us in their Preface, "have had to study this great Version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have been engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and,

<sup>1</sup> So recently as towards the close of last century, a Bible of the Genevan translation was in use in the church of Crail, in Fifeshire.

we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm."

The previous independent testimonies of two of their number to the same effect may well be quoted. "We in this land," said Dean Alford, when advocating the necessity of revision in a sermon in St. Paul's, "possess a version of Holy Scriptures which may challenge comparison for faithfulness, for simplicity, and for majesty with any that the world has ever seen. . . . And when we intensify all these claims to our affection by the fact that it has been for centuries, and is now, the vehicle to this great English race of all that is pure, and holy, and lovely, and of good report,—the first lesson of infancy, the guide of mature life, the comforter of sickness and death,—we can hardly be surprised that many and some of the best among us refuse to see its faults, and are unable to contemplate with any content the prospect of their being corrected."

And another great Biblical critic still happily spared to us, Bishop Westcott, to whose *History of the English Bible* we have made so many references in the preceding pages, writes : "Our version is the work of a Church and not of a man. Or rather, it is a growth and not a work. Countless external influences, independent of the actual translators, contributed to mould it ; and when it was fashioned the Christian instinct of the nation, touched, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, decided on its authority." He adds—and the words have an important bearing on the subject of our next chapter : "Our Bible in virtue of its past is capable of admitting revision, if need be, without violating its history. As it gathered into itself, during the hundred years in which it was forming, the treasures of manifold labours, so it still has the same assimilative power of life."

## CHAPTER XV

## THE REVISED VERSION

1. Schemes for revision.
2. Origin of the Revised Version.
3. Rules for the revisers' guidance.
4. The revisers at work.
5. Comparison with the Authorised Version.
6. Changes adopted in the Revised Version.
7. Its reception.

**§ 1. Schemes for Revision.**—In the quotations from two of the leading Biblical scholars of recent days with which our last chapter concluded, the advisableness of the revision of our Authorised Version was clearly hinted at. We must not however suppose that it was left to our own times to recognise this need. We are nearer the truth when we say that the revision of our Bible in one form or another has gone steadily on from the very year in which it was first published. For it is a curious fact that of the standard issues of the Authorised Version bearing the date 1611 there are still two sets of copies extant, differing in many minute particulars, and both containing numerous errors of their own, which it has been the work of later printers and editors to correct. Thus the one issue reads in Matt. xxvi. 36, “Then cometh Judas,” instead of “Then cometh Jesus”; while the other prints a part of Exod. xiv. 10 twice over. Other and less obvious emendations have been introduced from time to time in subsequent editions, until the reader of one of our modern Bibles would be astonished if he realised in how many places it differed from the 1611 text.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The most important of these variations may be conveniently

Apart from these “deliberate changes, introduced silently and without authority by men whose very names are often unknown,” we have abundant evidence of more ambitious proposals for amending the new version. Thus in 1645 Dr. John Lightfoot, preaching before the House of Commons, urged them “to think of a review and survey of the translation of the Bible,” and pleaded for “an exact, vigorous, and lively translation.” And a few years later the Long Parliament actually made an order that a Bill should be brought in for a new translation. But though a committee was appointed for the purpose, and held frequent meetings, the work “became fruitless by the Parliament’s dissolution.” Various other schemes for revision were mooted from time to time, and several independent translations of the Bible either in whole or in part were issued. The utmost, however, any of these can be said to have done, was to keep the whole question of revision an open one, and it was left to the Southern Convocation of the Church of England to take the initial steps for providing us with what is now known as *par excellence*

### The Revised Version.

§ 2. **Origin of the Revised Version.**—The very fact that it took its rise in Convocation marks off the Revised Version from all other English versions. Tindale’s Testament and Coverdale’s Bible were the work of individuals; the Great Bible and the Bishops’ were Episcopal in their origin; the Authorised Version was due to the King acting in concert with the Universities; but the idea of the Revised Version was matured by representatives of the Church of England sitting together in council, and carried through with the assistance of members of other Churches. Over the steps leading up to the final decision we cannot linger. Enough, that in May 1870 the report of a committee appointed in the preceding February was adopted, to the effect “that Convocation should nominate a body of its own members

studied in the margin of *The Parallel Bible*, Authorised Version and Revised Version, 1885.

to undertake the work of revision, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship to whatever nation or religious body they belong." Shortly afterwards in terms of this resolution two Companies for the revision of the Old and New Testaments respectively were appointed.

Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, was Chairman of the Old Testament Company, which, including all who at any time took part in the work, consisted of thirty-seven members. Amongst these were such well-known English scholars as Bishops Thirlwall of St. David's, and Wordsworth of Lincoln; Deans Perowne, Plumptre, and Payne Smith; Professors Cheyne and Driver, Oxford, and William Wright, Cambridge. The representatives from Scotland were Dr. Lindsay Alexander, Edinburgh; Professor Birrell, St. Andrews; Professor A. B. Davidson, F.C. College, Edinburgh; Principals Douglas and Fairbairn, F.C. College, Glasgow; Professor M'Gill, St. Andrews; Professor W. Robertson Smith, F.C. College, Aberdeen; and Professor Weir, Glasgow.

The New Testament Company was presided over by Dr. Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, and consisted at first of twenty-seven, but for the greater part of the time of twenty-four members. These included Archbishop Trench; Bishops Lightfoot and Westcott; Deans Stanley and Vaughan; Professors Hort and Kennedy, and Dr. Moulton, Cambridge; and Dr. F. H. A. Scrivener. The Scottish representatives were Bishop Wordsworth, St. Andrews; Principal Brown, F.C. College, Aberdeen; Professor Eadie, U.P. College, Glasgow; Professor Milligan, Aberdeen; and Professor Roberts, St. Andrews.

The responsibility of the work was further shared and its interest extended by the appointment of similar Companies in America, to whom the British revisers transmitted from time to time the several portions of their revision, receiving from them in return criticisms and suggestions. Dr. Philip Schaff of New York was the

President of the whole American Revision Committee ; while the Chairman of the Old Testament Company was Dr. William Henry Green of Princeton, and the Chairman of the New Testament Company, Dr. Theodore D. Woolsey of Yale College. To the “care, vigilance, and accuracy” of their American colleagues in these happily united labours, the revisers bear testimony in their Preface.

**§ 3. Rules for the Revisers' Guidance.**—These rules or general principles were eight in number, of which the five first were the most important :—

1. To introduce as few alterations as possible into the Text of the Authorised Version consistently with faithfulness.

2. To limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the Authorised and earlier English Versions.

3. Each Company to go twice over the portion to be revised, once provisionally, the second time finally, and on principles of voting as hereinafter is provided.

4. That the Text to be adopted be that for which the evidence is decidedly preponderating ; and that when the text so adopted differs from that from which the Authorised Version was made, the alteration be indicated in the margin.

5. To make or retain no change in the Text on the second final revision by each Company, except *two-thirds* of those present approve of the same, but on the first revision to decide by simple majorities.

**§ 4. The Revisers at Work.**—With the assistance of these rules, and the accounts which from various sources have reached us, it is not difficult to imagine the revisers at work. Unlike the translators in King James' time they were not divided into sub-committees, but each Company met as a whole, thereby securing an even greater uniformity in their work. The place of meeting was the Jerusalem Chamber, a large room attached to the Deanery of Westminster Abbey, and

already famous as the scene of the preparation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. On either side of a long table, reaching from end to end of the room, the revisers seated themselves, a sheet of paper with a small portion of the Authorised Version printed in the centre, and wide margins on either side for notes, lying before each. After prayers and the reading of the minutes of the last meeting, the Chairman read over the appointed passage, and asked for suggestions. Those dealing with questions affecting the original text were first considered, and the results noted ; then points of rendering were attended to. Whenever a marked difference of opinion arose, a vote of the whole Company was taken. So, in the case of the New Testament Company, the work went on for ten and a half years, the Company sitting for four days every month (with the exception of August and September) in each year, until at length in 1881 the Revised New Testament was published. Four years later the Revised Old Testament was ready, so that in 1885 the English reader had the complete Revised Version before him. Its title ran simply :—

“The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the Original Tongues : being the Version set forth A.D. 1611 compared with the most ancient Authorities and revised.”

#### § 5. Comparison with the Authorised Version.

—It is unnecessary to print lengthy extracts from a translation which is within the easy reach of all ; but it may be well to illustrate the advantages to be gained by a comparative study of the Authorised and Revised Versions by means of a few parallel verses. Let us take the passage of which we have already given Coverdale’s rendering on pp. 52-3. The close relation to it, and consequently to Tindale, of both our Authorised and Revised Versions is very marked, and need not be further commented upon.

## MATT. xiii. 3-8.

THE A.V. 1611

THE R.V. 1881

3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.

4. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up.

5. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.

6. And when the Sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had not root, they withered away.

7. And some fell among thorns: and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.

8. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirtyfold.

3 And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth

4 to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured

5 them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness

6 of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched: and because they had no root,

7 they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and

8 choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

Here it will be noticed that the R.V. has not "Behold, a sower," but "Behold, the sower," the definite article at least suggesting the presence of some sower actually at work in a field close at hand, and so giving reality to the whole story. Passing over such slight changes as "as he sowed" for "when he sowed," "the birds" for "the fowls," "devoured them" for "devoured them up," which could doubtless all be justified were it necessary, we come in ver. 5 to the important substitution of "upon the rocky places" for "upon stony places." The latter naturally recalls to the reader a field whose surface is covered with loose stones, which, however, is clearly out of keeping with the fate of the seed which fell upon it; whereas by "the rocky places" we are led to think of a thin sprinkling of earth over a rocky bed, exactly the kind of ground in which seed would spring up quickly,

but as quickly wither away. Again it is “upon the thorns,” and not “among thorns” that other seeds fell—upon soil, that is, in which the seeds of thorns lay already lurking, rather than among growing and flourishing thorn-plants, which the sower would see and avoid. While once more we cannot but feel the precision given to the fourth kind of soil, “the good ground,” and not merely “good ground.” Doubtless no one of these alterations in itself is of great importance, but taken together they certainly give a fresh interest to the passage, if in no other way, at least by arresting our attention, and causing us to ask what exactly it is that the words imply.

But it must not be thought that this represents all the value of the Revised Version. On the contrary it corrects many actual errors, and exhibits many passages in a wholly different light. With the aid of a Parallel Bible the reader can easily trace these for himself; but it may help him in this most important study, as well as prove the need there was of revision, if we suggest one or two examples under four general heads.

#### § 6. Changes adopted in the Revised Version.

—(1) *Changes necessitated by improved, that is, better authenticated readings.*—During the two and a half centuries that had elapsed since the Authorised Version was published, many ancient MSS. of great importance had been discovered, and in consequence the revisers found themselves in an immensely better position than their predecessors for determining what were the exact words of the original text. The result was additions in some places, omissions in others, and in others again alterations often of a very striking character. For an addition we may point to 1 John ii. 23, “He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also,” where the removal of the italics from the Authorised Version shows that the words are possessed of independent authority; for an omission, to the disappearance of the famous proof-text for the Trinity in the same Epistle, “In heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth” (v. 7. 8);

and for an alteration, to such a verse as Luke ii. 14, where a slight change in a Greek word gives a wholly new turn to the last clause, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

(2) *Changes necessitated by a misunderstanding of the original.*—An obvious example is Acts xxvi. 28, where for the familiar, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," we now read, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." So far from admitting himself to be "almost" converted, Agrippa rather insinuates that Paul is surely expecting too much from the short conversation that had passed. Of previous versions Purvey's revision of Wycliffe came nearest to this sense, "And Agrippa seide to Poul, In litil thing thou counseilist me to be maad a Cristen man." It is perhaps, however, in their treatment of the definite article, of prepositions, and of the tenses, that the excellence of the revisers' work under this head is most clearly seen—as when by the almost invariable insertion of the definite article before "Christ" in the Gospels,<sup>1</sup> they show that the word is not yet a proper name, but denotes an office: "Behoved it not the Christ [in His character, that is as Messiah] to suffer these things?" (Luke xxiv. 26); or when they bring out the definite past change worked for the believer by these sufferings, "We who died ['are dead,' Authorised Version] to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. vi. 2); or when they emphasise that it is only by continued union with his Lord that the complete benefits of this salvation can be enjoyed, "The free gift of God is eternal life in ['through,' Authorised Version] Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). The force of these fine distinctions may not be fully appreciated at first, but time will prove their value.

<sup>1</sup> The only places where the article is not found in the Greek are Mark ix. 41; Luke ii. 11; xxiii. 2; John ix. 22. "The turning-point," as Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out, "is the Resurrection. . . . From that time forward Christ begins to be used as a proper name with or without the article" (*On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament*, p. 100).

(3) *Changes necessitated by archaisms.*—It is an obvious imperfection in a popular version to retain words that have wholly passed out of general use, and it is well that the mysterious “taches,” “wimples,” and “habergeon” of the authorised Old Testament have given place to the more intelligible “clasps,” “shawls,” and “coat of mail” of the Revised Version. But still more serious confusion has been caused by words which have changed their meaning since 1611, and which, though a correct rendering of the original at that time, are no longer so. A commonly cited instance is the familiar word “thought,” which has lost the idea of care or anxiety once attached to it, and can therefore no longer adequately stand alone in such a verse as Matt. vi. 31. We must now translate “Take no anxious thought,” or, as in Revised Version “Be not anxious.” Again when in 1 Cor. iv. 4 St. Paul writes, “I know nothing by myself,” how few realise that he means, as the revised rendering shows, “against myself,” according to the old use of “by.”

(4) *Changes necessitated by inconsistency of rendering of the same words and phrases.*—This is a very numerous class, for, according to their own admission, the translators of the Authorised Version did not feel themselves tied “to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words,” with the result that in this translation many instructive parallelisms in the original are quite lost sight of. These are now happily restored in the Revised Version, as when we read that “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit [‘Ghost,’ Authorised Version] . . . was led by the Spirit in the wilderness” (Luke iv. 1); or find the warning, “Every branch that beareth fruit he *cleanseth* [‘purgeth,’ Authorised Version] it,” followed by the gracious assurance to the Apostles, “Already ye are *clean* because of the word which I have spoken unto you” (John xv. 2, 3).

§ 7. **Its Reception.**—From these examples of amended translations in the Revised Version—the list of which might be almost indefinitely extended—and such

other obvious improvements as the arrangement of the text into paragraphs, and the mode of printing the quotations from the Poetical books of the Old Testament,<sup>1</sup> it might reasonably have been expected that the new version would speedily supplant the old in general use. This, however, has not proved to be the case. After the extraordinary rush of interest which the first appearance of the Revised Version caused, the public have shown themselves slow to give up the version already hallowed to them by so many memories. And after all, in so acting, they have only repeated what has happened in the reception of most previous versions, in none more noticeably than of the Authorised Version itself. Meanwhile, we may be thankful that we have the Revised Version in our hands for comparison and guidance. It is an aid which no one who desires to get at the exact meaning of original Scripture can afford to do without. And the more it is studied, the more will its so-called blemishes disappear, and every page be found to throw new and striking light on the inexhaustible depths of meaning hidden in the sacred Word.

WE have finished our survey of the English versions of the Bible, and have seen how in the last of these we are the possessors of a translation which, in point of accuracy at any rate, leaves almost nothing to be desired. It is a long period from the Wycliffe Bible of 1382 to the Revised Version of 1885, and, as we look back upon it and recall the many influences and persons who have combined in giving us our English Bible, a new illustration is afforded of the old saying, "*Others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.*"

Nor is it only of the labour of past generations that the story of our Bible reminds us, but of self-sacrifice and

<sup>1</sup> For information regarding the marginal notes, the use of italics, punctuation, etc., the reader is referred to the Revisers' Prefaces to the Old and New Testaments, which should in any case be carefully studied by all who would rightly understand the nature of their work.

martyrdom. For it is a striking fact that of the men most actively engaged in Bible translation during the sixteenth century, no fewer than four perished by a violent death. Tindale was martyred in 1536 ; Cromwell, to whom we owe the Great Bible, was executed in 1540 ; John Rogers or Matthew was the first victim of the Marian persecutions ; and Cranmer, who gave his name to later editions of the Great Bible, was burnt at the stake in the same reign.

It is well for us to remember these things, and the toils and self-denials of other workers in the same field, if only that we may understand how precious is the legacy bequeathed to us, and how great our corresponding responsibility. “Ye are brought,” say the translators of the Authorised Version, “unto fountains of living water which ye digged not. . . . O receive not so great things in vain: O despise not so great salvation. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; but a blessed thing it is, and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end, when God speaketh unto us, to hearken; when He setteth His word before us, to read it; when He stretcheth out His hand and calleth, to answer, Here am I, here we are to do Thy will, O God.”

## SOME BOOKS ON THE SUBJECT

### 1. Introductory—

Lovett (R.), *The Printed English Bible, 1525-1885.*  
1s.

Smyth (J. Paterson), *How we got our Bible.* 1s.

Talbot (Canon), *Our Bible and how it has come to us.* 1s. 6d.

### 2. Histories—

Eadie (John), *The English Bible.* 2 vols. £1:8s.  
Moulton (W. F.), *The History of the English Bible.*  
3s. 6d.

Westcott (Bishop), *A General View of the History of the English Bible.* 2nd Ed. 1872. (Out of print.)

To these may be added as good popular accounts—

Pattison (T. Harwood), *The History of the English Bible.* 4s. 6d.

Stoughton (John), *Our English Bible: its Translations and Translators.* 6s.

While for reference the following will be found useful—

Dore (J. R.), *Old Bibles.* 5s.

Edgar (Andrew), *The Bibles of England.* 7s. 6d.

Mombert (J. I.), *English Versions of the Bible.* 6s.

Scrivener (F. H. A.), *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible, 1611.* 7s. 6d.

*British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books—Bible,*

*Part I.* 4s.

Lewis's *History of the English Translations of the Bible* (Lond. 1818), and Anderson's *The Annals of the English Bible* (1 vol. revised edition, Lond. 1862), contain much useful information, but require to be carefully verified.

### 3. Reprints—

Those who wish to study the subject for themselves, and have not access to the original editions in the great libraries, will find the following reprints very useful :—

*Job, Psalms, etc., Wycliffe, Hereford, and Purvey.*

1881. 3s. 6d. (Clarendon Press.)

*The New Testament, Wycliffe and Purvey.* 1879.

6s. (Clarendon Press.)

These are reprinted from Forshall and Madden's great work on *The Wycliffite Versions*. The following can usually be obtained at a moderate cost at the second-hand bookshops :—

*The New Testament, J. Wiclid* (Purvey's revision).

Edited by H. H. Baber. 1810.

*The First Printed English New Testament, W. Tindale,* 1525. Edited by E. Arber. 1871.

*The New Testament, W. Tyndale,* 1526 (being the complete octavo edition). Edited by G. Offor. 1836.

*The Holy Scriptures, M. Coverdale,* 1535 (Bagster).

*The English Hexapla*, containing the New Testaments of Wiclid (Purvey's revision), Tyndale (1534), Great Bible (1539), Geneva (1557), Anglo-Rhemish (1582), Authorised (1611) (Bagster).

*The Oxford Reprint of the Authorized Version,* 1611. 1833.

Mombert's reprint of Tindale's *Five Books of Moses*, and Fry's *New Testament, Tyndale, 1525*, and *Bibliographical Descriptions* of the different Tindale Testaments, and of the various editions of the Great Bible, are also very important, but they are scarcer and more costly.

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